



AQUA Scans & Icarus Bride present:

# Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 1

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Black Fairy”*

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## **Chapter 1: The Scarecrow and the Fairy**

The sun rises in front of her; a warm white light hit Ann's face, shining brightly. On the driver's seat, Ann held the reins. From the hem of her cotton dress, she could feel the cold wind blowing. Even with clean lace covering the hem of her modest dress, she couldn't help but shiver slightly.

As she took in a deep breath, she looked up at the sky.

The rain from yesterday night seemed to shed some of the dust from the air. The autumn sky was clear.

Today is the day for her departure. Clasping the reins with both hands, she looked ahead.

The road was muddy; the wheels of the horse-driven carriage were piling up with mud.

From now on, she would be on her own, and she would be walking this road alone. Worry and nervousness spread throughout her thin body.

But there is also a bit of hope that she feels in her chest.

"Ann! Wait, Ann!"

She heard a voice from behind.

Behind the box-shaped carriage that Ann was riding, simple houses made of stone were strewn out. For the past half year, Ann had been indebted to Knoxberry, a village located in the northwest part of the Highland Kingdom.

Ever since Ann was born, she, together with her mother, Emma, had lived by travelling. Therefore, Knoxberry village was the first that they stayed in the same place for six months.

From that village, a tall golden-haired boy came over. He was the only son of a family who ran a candy crafting business in the village of Knoxberry. His name was Jonas.

"Waah, this is bad!"

Ducking her head, Ann whipped the horse, allowing the carriage to start moving. She then waved back.

"Jonas! Thank you. Please take care!"

"Wait a moment, Ann! Wait! Do you hate me?!"

"That's not it, so don't worry about it."

Returning with a loud voice, Jonas yelled out completely out of breath.

"Then - then, please wait!"

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”Geez, I've already made up my mind. Goodbye!”

The distance between the two quickly grew apart. When Jonas couldn't catch up, he paused. He looked towards her with a bewildered expression, as he gasped for breath.

Ann gave a big wave back again, before looking forward once more.

”Watch over me...Mama”

Earlier that spring, the healthy and merry Emma, fell sick.

And during that time, while staying at Knoxberry by chance, she became unable to move.

The villagers were kind to Ann and Emma, who were strangers to them.

They stayed at the village while trying to cure Emma of her disease, and the villagers gave them a recommendation, to go to Jonas's house. The mother and daughter spent six months there, without having to pay any rent. It might be due to the fact that they were in the same business that the family helped them out.

However, Emma never healed. She passed away half a month ago.

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”Find your own way of living, and walk on that path firmly. If it's you, you can definitely do it. You're a good child, so don't cry.”

Those were...Emma's final words.

The funeral arrangements, such as the burial in the country's church, went on. While doing necessary tasks, the grief that surfaced quickly slid by. Although Ann did feel sorrow, she was never able to cry out loud.

*Emma is now...sleeping in the corner of the Knoxberry cemetery.* And while thinking that, somehow her hazy heart was able to appease her thoughts.

When she'd finished all the tasks, half a month had passed since Emma had died. At that exact time, Ann decided to depart.

Three nights ago, Ann told the family she was indebted to that she will go out on a journey.

“Ann, you can't go out on a journey alone. It's fine if you just stay in this village. And... that's right. Why don't you become my bride?”

Jonas whispered, grasping the hand of Ann, who was determined to go on a journey. Brushing up strands of soft golden hair with a smile, he looked at Ann with glimmering eyes.

“You've always been in my mind.”

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Ann and Jonas had spent six months living in the same house. But during that period, they had never talked intimately. It didn't even cross her mind that the other party would possibly court her.

Among Jonas's refined features, his blue eyes were exceptionally beautiful. It looked like an expensive glass imported from the south made for a king.

So being stared at by those eyes, when they don't even know each other's likes and dislikes, puzzled her.

It's not like being courted made her unhappy. But even then, Ann had already decided to go on her journey.

She thought that if she informed Jonas of her departure, she might be held back from leaving. So she decided to secretly leave the village early in the morning. However, as expected, Jonas followed her.

“Marriage...”

Absent-mindedly, she voiced it out. It was as if that word was completely unrelated to her.

In the village, Jonas was popular with the ladies.

Of course, one of the reasons why he is so popular was because he was from a wealthy candy shop.

Even though he was living in a rural area like Knoxberry, Jonas came from a well-known faction of candy craftsmen, and also a blood relative of the founder of the Radcliffe guild.

It is a big possibility that he will be chosen as the next head of the Radcliffe guild.

Before long, to prepare him for becoming the next head of the guild, Jonas would probably be going to the Imperial City, Lewiston, for his apprenticeship.

That was the rumor circulating around the village.

Speaking about the head of a candy guild faction, if he's lucky, he can even become a viscount.

Jonas, for the girls of the village, was already the equivalent of a prince.

In comparison, Ann had a small build for a 15 year old. Being gangly and having light wheat colored hair, she was always called “Scarecrow”.

And incidentally, her only property was a single tired horse and the old horse carriage.

A wealthy blonde prince asking a poor scarecrow to marry him. It's like a dream.

“Oh well. It's not like the prince seriously falls in love with the scarecrow anyway.”

Ann muttered with a bitter smile, as she whipped the horse.

Jonas was by nature a playboy; he was especially kind to girls. The only reason that a person like him would be inclined to ask her for marriage would be because he felt pity for her due to her circumstances.

She wouldn't want to get married out of sympathy. A happily-ever-after by marrying a prince - that kind of princess like fairytale, doesn't seem to be a life worth living.

It's not like she hated Jonas. But living a life with him didn't seem to have any charm.

Experiencing everything by taking each step with her own two feet, that is the life she wants.

Ann's father, having been caught up in the civil war, died soon after she was born.

But Emma, as a single woman, raised Ann, and lived on.

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Furthermore, Emma became a Silver Sugar Master, an admirable occupation.

Candy craftsmen are common anywhere in the country of Highland. But only those recognized as Silver Sugar Masters are the best, and in Highland only a few of them existed.

Emma became a Silver Sugar Master at the age of twenty.

The sugar candy made by a Silver Sugar master could be sold at a higher price compared to the candies made by an ordinary candy craftsman. However, in towns and villages of the countryside, these expensive sugar candies don't sell well.

In the imperial city, Lewiston, there was a huge demand for these. But because famous silver sugar masters gathered there, it was very difficult place to compete in.

Emma chose to journey throughout the kingdom, to find customers who needed sugar candies there.

She liked the abysmally strong brightness that Emma possessed.

The journey was harsh, but having earned it on your own - having walked on your own feet, made it enjoyable.

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*If I can be a Silver Sugar Master like Mama, then it would be wonderful.*

For so long, that was what she idly thought. When Emma died, she finally decided on her future, and through the deep love and respect for her mother, determination bloomed inside Ann.

*I'll become a Silver Sugar Master.*

But, becoming a Silver Sugar Master isn't an easy task. She knew that as well.

Every year in Lewiston, the royal family hosted the sugar sculpture festival. To become a silver sugar master, it is necessary to participate and win the top-ranking royal medal.

Emma participated in the fair when she was twenty years old, and was awarded the royal medal. And then she was given the right to call herself a Silver Sugar Master.

Silver sugar candy is a candy made from purifying silver sugar from sugar apples. Apart from silver sugar, there is nothing that cannot make sugar candies. There is nothing more beautiful than the workmanship of candies using silver candies.

Sugar candies can be used for weddings, funerals, coronations, coming-of-age, and other various ceremonies.

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It is said that without sugar candies, all kinds of ceremonies wouldn't be able to begin.

Silver sugar invites blessings, and expels misfortune. It is often called the "promise of sweet blessings", a holy food.

Legends say that during the era when fairies still ruled over Highland, the fairy people consumed silver sugar to extend their lives.

It was said that a mysterious energy, referred to as "Form", dwelled within beautiful sugar candies made from silver sugar.

Humans eat silver sugar and sugar candies, but of course, it doesn't extend their lives.

But humans were also able to obtain the mysterious power that helps extend a fairy's life.

In fact, when people have beautiful sugar candy and eat them, often, unexpected luck pours in. Without a doubt, the probability of good fortune coming along increases.

That is what humans realized after a period of hundreds of years experiencing it.



The cart proceeded down a road with fields of wheat spreading out on both sides.

By the time the sun was high in the sky, she'd arrived at the provincial capital of Redington, the largest city in the vicinity of Knoxberry Village.

Redington was a castle town[1] that radiated out around a circular plaza at its center. Up on a hill overlooking Redington was the castle of the Duke who ruled Redington province.

As she proceeded slowly into the city, she came upon a crowd of people in front of her. The crowd was completely blocking the road.

Ann shrugged her shoulders and got down from the driver's seat. She tapped lightly on the shoulder of a peasant woman whose back was turned toward her.

"Um, excuse me... What is everyone doing? The road is blocked, and my cart can't pass through..."

"No... You can go through, but... Young lady, do you have the courage to cut through *that*?"

"That?"

Ann ducked down as if to pass under the peasant woman's armpit, and peered at the thing everyone was looking at.

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There was a brawny man standing in a puddle of mud. There was a bow strapped to his back and a longsword hanging at his waist. He was wearing leather boots and a fur vest. He was most likely a hunter.

“You useless little--!!”

Raising his voice, the hunter stomped on a clump of mud over and over again. Drops of mud went flying. Each time the clump of mud was stomped on, it let out a loud, “Gyaa!!”

Looking closely, Ann could see that the clump of mud was the size of a human’s palm, and human-shaped. It was lying face down and had a single, half transparent wing sticking out of its back, repelling the mud.

“Is that a fairy?! That’s horrible!”

As Ann let out what sounded like a little shriek, the peasant woman nodded.

Fairies were living creatures resembling humans who lived in the forests and fields. There were many types in all kinds of shapes and sizes, but the two half-transparent wings growing out of their backs were a special feature they all shared.

Fairies had special abilities, so if you used[2] them right, there were all sorts of things you could get them to do.

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She'd heard that the royal family, aristocrats and knights were using a large number of fairies for their own various purposes.

Even among the populace, middle class families often had at least one fairy helping them do household chores.

Jonas's family in Knoxberry Village also had a fairy named Kathy, who was about the size of a human's palm. Kathy helped with Jonas's personal care and with preparing the sugar sculptures.

"It's a labor fairy belonging to that fairy hunter. It stole its own wing and tried to run away."

The peasant woman lowered her voice and pointed to the fairy hunter.

In his hand, the fairy hunter was gripping a slender wing. It was likely the matching pair to the one on the back of the mud-drenched fairy.

In order to control a fairy, the master[3] would pluck off one of the fairy's wings and keep it with them at all times.

A fairy's wings were the source of their life's energy. It was said that fairies could survive even if their wings were separated from their bodies. However, if their wings were damaged, they'd grow weak and die.

Analogous to a human, a fairy's wings were like it's heart. Anyone would quake in fear if their heart were held in the palm of someone else's hand. They'd become unable to oppose the person who held their heart.

That's why, by plucking off one of the fairy's wings, the master was able to use the fairy as they wished.

But, of course, no fairy wanted to be a slave. There were many who tried to distract their masters so that they could take back their wings and run away.

Although people were whispering "Even if he is a fairy, that treatment is too horrible," and "That fairy is going to die," not one of them made a move to do anything about it.

Ann looked up at the peasant woman next to her and the men nearby.

"Hold on, everyone! Is it really okay not to stop that guy's horrible behavior?!"  
But the people around her averted their eyes, seemingly unsure of themselves.

The peasant woman whispered weakly, "I feel bad for him, but.... Fairy hunters have violent temperaments. We're afraid of retaliation... And besides, it's only a fairy..."

"So what if it's a fairy?! If you sit around wringing your hands and doing nothing, that poor child will die. Fine then, I'll go!"



Ann brushed the peasant woman aside and took a step towards the fairy hunter. “Hey, young lady. I’m telling you, a child like you should quit while you’re ahead.”

“I’m not a child. I’m 15 years old. In this country a girl is legally an adult at 15, right? *I’m* an upstanding adult. I’d be mortified my whole life if I, as a full-grown adult, just stood by and watched a fairy be pummeled to death. It’s not a joke.”

Ann straightened her back and strode determinedly towards the fairy hunter. Perhaps because he was so worked up, the fairy hunter didn’t notice Ann. With the fairy crushed under his boot, he gripped the wing he possessed in both hands.

“This is your wing! It means that you belong to me!”

“Stop it, you bastard! Stop!!”

Given everything, the fairy still acted bravely, thrashing his tiny arm and legs and sending up splashes of mud. He shouted in a shrill, high-pitched voice.

But the fairy hunter mercilessly stretched out the wing in his hands.

The fairy in the mud let out a shriek.

“I’m going to kill you, you thieving fairy!”

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Just as the fairy hunter put more force into his hands to tear the wing in half, Ann came to stand behind him. She lowered her hips and braced herself.

“Hey you, you’re too rude!!”

Together with her voice, the hem of her dress went flying up. Ann kicked out forcefully with one leg and connected with the backs of the fairy hunter’s knees. It was Ann’s special technique, the sudden death knee kick.

The fairy hunter was caught completely off guard and his knees buckled. He lost his balance and fell face-first onto the muddy road, his mouth open in an O of surprise.

As the onlookers burst out laughing, the fairy leapt to his feet, freed from under the fairy hunter’s boot. Ann leapt over the fairy hunter’s head and nimbly snatched the wing out of his hand.

“You bitch!!” the fairy hunter yelled, raising his mud-covered face.

Ann leapt lightly back and held out the wing she’d recovered to the fairy, who stood motionless in shock.

“Here, take it. This is yours, right?”

As if he'd finally come to his senses, the fairy snatched the wing. In his mud-streaked face, only his blue eyes shone with a strange light. The fairy looked up at Ann and said, "Tch! I'm not going to thank a human!!"

After spewing this out[4], he took off, dodging around the legs of the onlookers, clutching the wing. Ignoring the people who let out yelps of surprise and moved to let him pass, the fairy made for the outskirts of the city with all the speed of a gale of wind, and soon disappeared from sight.

Ann shrugged.

"Oh well. I guess I am one of those detestable humans, after all."

"What are you going to do about this, little girl?! How dare you let my important labor fairy get away!!" the fairy hunter shouted, standing up roughly with mud dripping from his chin.

Ann turned back to the fairy hunter and said, "But, Oji-san, you were planning to kill that fairy, weren't you? If so, isn't that the same as him disappearing?"

"What?!"

The furious fairy hunter raised his arm.

But the onlookers surrounding them raised their voices as one in protest.

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“A big man like you, raising a hand against a child like that?!”

“It’s as that girl says!”

“You’re too barbaric!!”

Under the force of the onlookers’ protests, the man shrunk back. Ann looked straight up at him unflinchingly.

With a low groan, he lowered his raised arm.

“Thank you. It’s a good thing you’re such a good person, Oji-san. A good person like you will surely be kind to fairies from now on as well, right? That’s great!”

Ann flashed him a sickly-sweet grin, and the fairy hunter’s expression twisted into an incomprehensible cross between smiling and furious.

Lightly bidding the fairy hunter goodbye with a “See you later,” Ann made her way through the crowd of thunderously applauding onlookers and returned to the driver’s seat of her cart.

She muttered indignantly, “I can’t believe it. It’s just too cruel. So what if he’s a fairy?!”

Fairies were, primarily in their appearance, a bit different from humans. Yet they still possessed feelings and free will, and spoke the human language. Ann thought that they were no different than humans. People whose conscience

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wasn't bothered by using fairies like slaves were the ones with something wrong with them. That's why Emma absolutely never used fairies either.

We won't use fairies. That was Emma and Ann's creed. But----...

Ann's expression suddenly turned dark.

"...But... I, too, right now...Am about to do something horrible..."

Ann lightly applied the whip to the horses and drove the cart forward again.

When she came to the center of town, she called out to a few children playing nearby, and passed them some small change. Then she asked them to watch the cart for her for a short while. The children eagerly accepted.

She got down from the cart and headed towards the circular plaza.

In the plaza there were tents lined up at irregular intervals.

The tents were made of cloth painted with animal fat. They gave off a particular, greasy stench. Groceries, cloth, copperware and other goods were laid out underneath the tents. This was a marketplace. It was bustling with people.

A sweet and sour scent tickled her nose, coming from the tent where one could drink heated wine. It was a famous product of this marketplace from fall through winter.

Making her way through the marketplace, which was so congested that people were literally shoulder-to-shoulder, she came out to a place with fewer passers-by.

This block was deserted. There were quite a few shops, but extremely few customers.

She cast her eyes at a nearby tent.

A cage woven with ivy hung from the tent's crossbeam. There was a fairy the size of a human's palm inside the cage. On its back was a single, half translucent wing. 5 or 6 of these cages were lined up in a row. The tiny fairy sitting inside of the cage was looking over at her with suspicious eyes.

In the next tent, there were 3 shaggy fairies the size of dogs. They were chained with collars around their necks. The single translucent wings on each of their backs hung limply, as if withered up. The shaggy fairies bared their teeth threateningly at Ann.

This was the fairy market.

Fairy hunters hunted fairies in the forests and fields and sold them to fairy merchants. The fairy merchants then plucked off one of the wings of the

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fairies who would become their merchandise, set an appropriate price, and sold them off at the fairy market.

If she intended to head for the royal capital of Lewiston, passing through Redington required going a bit out of the way. The reason she'd stopped here regardless of that fact was because she knew that the marketplace in this city contained an established fairy market.

Approaching the nearest tent, Ann called out to the fairy merchant, "Excuse me, do you sell warrior fairies?"

At this, the fairy merchant shook his head.

"I don't deal in them. Too dangerous, those types."

"Then, do you know of anyone in this marketplace who does handle them?"

"There's only one place. The old man in that tent by the wall over there deals in them, but... You should give up now, young lady. Not a good quality product, that one."

"Oh, really? Well, I'll just go and have a look. Thank you."

She thanked him and walked off.

Fairy merchants classified and sold fairies according to their appearances and abilities.

The majority of fairies were sold as “Labor Fairies,” to be used for manual labor.

Those whose appearances were particularly beautiful or particularly exotic were sold as “Pet Fairies,” to be used ornamentally.

And those who were particularly ferocious and could be used as guards or soldiers were sold as “Warrior Fairies.”

Ann had come to the fairy market to buy a warrior fairy.

From here, Ann would go to Lewiston to participate in the sugar sculpture festival[5].

The highway connecting the western part of the kingdom where Knoxberry Village and Redington were to Lewiston was called “The Bloody Highway.”

It was a very dangerous highway. The highway traversed unsettled wilderness and there were no rest stops or towns along the way. Because the area was very poor, there were brigades of people who’d gone broke and become bandits, and there were also many wild beasts.



It was a highway that Emma had avoided crossing during her continuous journeys.

There was a safe way to get to Lewiston by making a detour to the south and taking another highway.

However that route wouldn't get her to Lewiston in time for this year's sugar sculpture festival.

Ann wanted to make it time for this year's sugar sculpture festival no matter what. It was for an incredibly sentimental reason.

Even she knew that. But without clinging to those sentimental reasons and constructing an objective before her eyes towards which to strive, she felt that she'd surely lose her footing.

*----This year, for sure, I will become a silver sugar master. I've decided.*

She raised her gaze determinedly.

To traverse the bloody highway, she would need a guard.

But, unfortunately, reliable guards were nearly impossible to find.

In that case, her only option was a warrior fairy. Fairies didn't disobey the person who held their wing. As guards they were extremely reliable.

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Her desire to become a silver sugar master this year was huge. For that purpose, Ann would bend her conviction not to use fairies.

When she reached the area she'd been told about, she came to a halt and looked around.

In which of these tents were warrior fairies being sold?

In the tent to her left, cages containing palm-sized fairies were strung up.

These fairies were probably being sold as labor fairies.

In the tent to her right, there were adorable little fairies the size of a grain of wheat inside of glass bottles sitting on a table. A fairy of that size probably wouldn't be of any use for manual labor, so they were likely a pet fairies. They were sold for children to play with as toys.

There was another tent at the end of the alleyway straight ahead. The goods for sale in this tent consisted of a single fairy.

There was a tanned leather rug laid out under the tent, and the fairy was sitting on top of it, with one knee bent. There was a chain around its ankle, connected to an iron stake driven into the ground.

The fairy's appearance was that of a young man, approximately 2 heads taller than Ann.

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He wore black boots and pants, and a supple jacket. The matching set of clothing, all in black, was likely something the fairy merchant dressed him in to drive up the price. The fairy's appearance certainly stood out.

He had black eyes and black hair, and there was a sharp atmosphere about him. His white skin, which looked as if it had never been exposed to the sun, was another special characteristic all fairies shared.

On his back, there was a single, half transparent wing. It lay out on the rug looking just like a veil. The fairy's appearance was extremely beautiful. There was something about him that gave off a sense of quiet dignity.

There was no doubt that this was a pet fairy. He seemed to be exactly the type that aristocratic ladies would be clamoring to buy at a high price as a decoration.

Beneath the bangs that hung down over his forehead, his eyes were downcast.

The languid light of the afternoon sun danced along his eyelashes. Just by looking at him, Ann experienced something pleasurable that sent shivers up her spine.

*----How beautiful...*

As she gazed at him, drawn in by those long eyelashes, the fairy suddenly raised his face.

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Their eyes met. The fairy gazed directly at Ann.

As if he were thinking something, the fairy briefly knit his brows. But then, seemingly having made up his mind, he muttered, “I thought you looked familiar, but now I’ve got it-- you look just like a scarecrow.”

And just like that, apparently having lost all interest, he once again averted his gaze away from Ann.



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“H-how rude... Saying such things about a girl blossoming in the peak of her youth...!”

At the fairy’s utterance to himself, Ann’s hands unconsciously clenched into fists.

“There’s not much blooming[6] going on there...” the fairy shot back, still turned away from her.

“What a horrible thing to say---!?”

The person selling this rude fairy was an elderly fairy merchant. He was next to the tent, smoking a cigarette. When he saw Ann with her eyebrows drawn up in anger, the fairy merchant opened his mouth as if to say “Not again!”

“Sorry, young lady. This product of mine has a foul mouth on him. He harasses all the humans who pass by, no matter who they are. Pay him no mind and continue on your way.”

“I do mind! It’s really not any of my business, but you’ll never be able to sell a pet fairy with such a foul mouth! Never! Why don’t you give up on selling him and let him go already?!”

“He’s not a pet fairy. He’s a warrior fairy.”

Ann's eyes widened. It seemed that this was the tent she'd been told about, the one that sold warrior fairies.

Still, she couldn't believe it.

"A warrior fairy?! That can't be? No matter how you look at it, he's more fit to be sold as a pet fairy. I've seen warrior fairies before. They were huge, and tough as rocks."

"This is also a warrior fairy. He's an excellent specimen; they say 3 fairy hunters died hunting him."

With an openly doubtful expression, Ann crossed her arms.

"The oji-san I talked to earlier did say that you were selling a 'low quality product.' Aren't you just calling this foul-mouthed pet fairy a warrior fairy so that you can sell him?"

"For fairy merchants, our reputation is everything. I wouldn't lie."

Ann returned her gaze to the fairy.

The fairy was looking at Ann again. He was smiling faintly, as if he found something funny.

It was a fearless expression. He certainly didn't look like an obedient fairy. He had an air about him like he was up to something, but that still didn't mean that he looked strong enough to be useful as a warrior fairy.

“I want a warrior fairy, but... Do you have any others besides him?”

At her question, the fairy merchant shook his head.

“Warrior fairies are tricky to handle. You can't deal with more than one at a time. He's the only one I have for sale. Just so you know, I'm the only one in this fairy market who sells warrior fairies. If you go to Libonpool, 60 Caron north of here, there's one other fairy merchant who sells warrior fairies.”

“If I have to make a detour to Libonpool, I won't make it in time for the sugar sculpture festival,” Ann moaned, chewing on her thumbnail.

“Hey, scarecrow.”

Suddenly, the fairy opened his mouth. Ann glared at him.

“By “scarecrow” do you happen to mean *me*, the lovely 15 year old maiden before whom even flowers hide their faces in shame?!”

“Who else is there here besides you? Stop dilly-dallying and buy me.”

For a moment, Ann was completely stunned.

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“...Buy me... I-is that an order...?”

The fairy merchant, after making a surprised face, clutched his belly and laughed heartily.

“This is great! This is the first time I’ve ever heard him tell anyone to buy him. Did you fall in love with this young lady at first sight or something? How about it, miss? You don’t have any choice but to buy him, right? I’ll give you a huge deal and let you have him for 100 Cres. If not for that foul mouth of his, I’d sell him as a pet fairy. There would be people willing to spend 300 Cres to buy him as a pet fairy.”

“That would be *if* he didn’t have such a foul mouth~~”

But the amount of money the fairy merchant had suggested was indeed cheap. Warrior fairies and pet fairies were rare, and so they were expensive. 100 Cres was equal to 1 gold coin. For a warrior fairy, it was an unprecedentedly low price.

“Hey, you. If you’re telling me to buy you, does that mean you have faith in your abilities as a warrior fairy?”

At this, the fairy looked up at Ann with a glint in his eyes.

“What do you want me to do?”

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“Guard duty. I will be traveling to Lewiston alone. I want you to protect me on the way there.”

The fairy smiled confidently.

“That’s nothing. I’ll even give you a kiss as a free bonus.”

“I don’t need such an overbearing bonus! Especially for my precious first kiss, it would be a shame to have it stolen away like that.”

“Such a child.”

“Well excuse me for being a child!”

Of course she would have preferred a more serious and obedient warrior fairy if it were possible. But she didn’t have time to make a detour all the way to Libonpool. Ann made her decision.

*----It can’t be helped!! So he’s got a foul mouth, so what? I can’t afford to be picky.*

She took a hemp bag out of the pocket of her dress. She opened it and took out the only gold coin mixed in among the copper coins.

“Ojii-san, I’ll buy this fairy.”

“Hehe, so you gave in after all, eh, miss?”

The merchant flashed a gold tooth as he laughed. When Ann held out the gold coin, the fairy merchant examined it carefully and accepted it. Then he removed a small leather bag that had been hanging around his neck.

“Alright, then, let’s confirm the wing.”

The fairy merchant opened the small leather bag and took out what looked like a transparent cloth folded up to around the size of a human’s palm. Taking hold of the tip, he shook it once and the folded up item flapped open. A wing about as long as Ann was tall appeared before her eyes.

The half-transparent wing, which reflected rainbows of light according to the condition of the lighting, was so beautiful that she was hesitant to touch it. Although it had been folded up, there were no wrinkles or lines like a cloth would have. When she reached out her hand and tightly touched it, it felt like silk. The smoothness of it gave her the shivers.

“This is his wing?”

“That’s right. I’ll prove it to you.”

As he said this, the fairy merchant grabbed the wing at the tip and somewhere in the middle and pulled, stretching it out. Immediately, the fairy under the tent groaned.

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The fairy seemed to be bracing himself, and his whole body stiffened. He was gritting his teeth.

“Stop!! I get it already, so stop!!”

At Ann’s words, the fairy merchant loosened his grip on the wing.

The fairy’s body went limp, and he braced one hand on the ground. When he raised his head, he glared balefully at the fairy merchant.

The fairy merchant folded the wing up, returned it to the bag and handed the bag to Ann.

“Hang this around your neck and keep it on you at all times. No matter what you do, be careful. If this bag leaves your hands, there’s no telling what the fairy will do to you. I had an acquaintance who was killed by his own warrior fairy after it took its wing back. Warrior fairies are ferocious. That’s precisely why they’re sold as warrior fairies. If they get their wing back, they aren’t content to just run away. It’s likely that they’ll kill their master.”

“But what should I do when I got to bed? Won’t I be taken by surprise while I’m sleeping?”

“When you go to bed, make sure to hide the wing inside your clothes and hold onto it while you sleep.”

“With that I’ll be okay?”

“Just think about it. This person is holding your heart in the palm of their hands. Even if you succeeded in killing them, they might be able to crush your heart in the moments before dying... Fairies wings are especially fragile. So they’re frightened and can’t act rashly. Having their wings damaged is a fear that appeals to a fairy’s deepest instincts. You saw how much pain he was in just now, didn’t you?”

Certainly, after seeing how he suffered she could understand why fairies couldn’t easily strike out at their masters.

After actually feeling what it was like to use fear and pain to control another person, her depression about using a fairy only increased.

“Just be careful. Especially of this one. Up until now, every time it looked like he might be bought he started spewing out insults and nastiness that you’d never imagine he’d be capable of just from looking at his face, and in the end he scared away all the customers and remained unpurchased. And yet, this time he was the one who told you to buy him. I don’t know if he’s just that damn fickle or what, but whatever the case, this is a miracle.”

“Is he really that troublesome?!”

“Are you going to change your mind about buying him, after all?”

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Ann thought a minute, but then shook her head.

“I don’t have time to go to Libonpool. I’ll buy him.”

“In that case, it’s fine. Be careful with that wing. Make sure he never gets the chance to take it from you.”

When Ann nodded, the fairy merchant set to work removing the chain around the fairy’s ankle.

The fairy gave a thin smile, as sharp as a blade, and whispered to the fairy merchant, “Just you wait. One day, I’ll come to kill you.”

“Oh, isn’t that nice. I’ll be looking forward to it.”

Lightly parrying the threatening farewell, the fairy merchant removed the chain.

The fairy stood up. He was tall. His wing, shimmering with rainbow colors in the sunlight, extended to his knees.

“So, I guess I’ve purchased you. Please treat me kindly.”

As she said this, the fairy smiled mockingly.



The fairy crossed his legs long-sufferingly, crossed his arms, and leaned back against the backrest of the driver's seat. You could say he was lounging. Between the fairy and Ann, who handled the horses fussily, the fairy seemed a hundred times more in charge.

The fairy glanced over at Ann as if it were a huge bother.

“Why do you ask?”

“Because, I don't know what to call you, right?”

“You can call me Tom or Sam, or another of those names that you humans are fond of.”

Generally, when using a fairy, the master would give it a name. But Ann didn't like this, because she felt it was humiliating not to be referred to using your real name.

“If it were me, I'd want to be called by my real name. Aren't you the same? I don't want to just give you some random name and start calling you that. So tell me your name.”

“I don't care what you call me. Don't ask such stupid questions. Just give me whatever name you want and call me that.”



The fairy turned away. Ann peered at the side of his face and said, “Then I guess I’ll call you ‘Crow’?”

As expected, the fairy looked at Ann with an extremely unpleasant expression.

“In exchange for being called Scarecrow?”

“That’s right, Crow-san.”

The fairy knit his eyebrows. Then, after a moment of silence, he said reluctantly, “Shall Fen Shall.”

“That’s your name?”

At her question, he nodded. Ann smiled.

“What a pretty name. Much nicer than Crow. Which part of ‘Shall Fen Shall’ is your name and which part is your family name?”

“The whole thing is my name. There’s no separation between personal and family names like in human names.”

“Oh, really? But ‘Shall Fen Shall’ is too long... So I’ll just call you Shall. Is that okay?”

“I said you should call me however you like, didn’t I? You are my master.”

“I guess that’s true...”

Hearing it directly from the fairy’s mouth once again, it wasn’t something she was happy about. Her sense of guilt at having bought a fairy to use as a slave became even stronger.

Under Ann’s guidance, the cart pulled out of Redington and proceeded towards the bloody highway.

The fields of wheat ripe for the harvest disappeared, giving way on both sides of the road to sparse forest.

Feeling that they were close to the bloody highway, Ann opened her mouth.

“I bought you to serve as my bodyguard. But there’s one thing I promise you. When we’ve crossed the bloody highway and arrived safely in Lewiston, I’ll return your wing to you.”

Hearing this, Shall looked at Ann with distrust.

“You’re saying you’ll free me?”

“That’s right.”

At this, Shall made a surprised face for a moment, but then immediately let out a stifled laugh from deep in his throat.

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“You’re going to let a fairy that you spent a gold coin on go? Are there really such naive humans?”

“‘Naive’ is a rude way to put it. I just think that fairies and humans can be friends. I don’t like using a person that I might be able to become friends with. I bought you because I needed a reliable guard immediately and had no other options. But if I don’t have to, I don’t want to use fairies. Of course, selling you to some other human is also out of the question. So I’ll return your wing to you. That’s why, if possible, while we’re journeying together I’d like us to be like regular friends.”

“Friends? There’s no way we could be friends.”

Ann sighed at his cold words.

“That may be so, but... This is just my and mama’s ideal. But with ideals, as with dreams, no matter how long you have them, if no one makes them into a reality, they’ll always just be an ideal. So I’m going to make it a reality.”

“I guess we’ll see the proof of whether or not you’re really that much of a scarecrow-brain once we arrive in Lewiston.”

“Didn’t I tell you not to call me Scarecrow?!”

The palm of her hand went flying towards him, but Shall lightly intercepted it.

Ann chewed on her lower lip, vexed.

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“Why did you tell me to buy you, if you think I’m such an idiot? If it were me, I’d definitely not want to be used by someone I think is a huge idiot.”

“Humans are all the same. In that case, it’s easier for me if my master is a blockhead. You just seemed to be the biggest blockhead I’ve seen in the past few years.”

“...For some reason... When I talk to you, I always end up getting thoroughly depressed...”

Ann understood why Shall had gone unsold for so long.

If he was this nasty about being her guard, how would he be when it came to actually protecting her?

The wind ruffling the lace on the hem of her dress suddenly became colder.

Ann noticed that a wild, rocky highway spread out before her. This was the bloody highway. The cart slowly entered the highway.

The wheels rolled over the stones, and the tall cart swayed left and right with the vibration.

The sky was clear, but the air was cold. The vicinity of the bloody highway was surrounded by high mountain ranges, and the wind blowing down from the mountains carried with it the cold of high places.

The wasteland of dried grass extended as far as the eye could see.

There were occasional, straggling trees, but it was obvious at first glance that the soil was depleted.

Along the bloody highway, there weren't any towns or villages. However, the rulers of each of the territories the highway traversed maintained the part of the highway that passed through their own territory.

Although the highway was "maintained," that didn't mean that they captured the robbers or drove away wild beasts. There were only 2 things the territorial rulers did.

First, they trimmed once a year so that plants wouldn't encroach on the highway.

Second, they built simple fortresses, called "Rest stops," where travelers could spend the night.

The bloody highway was dangerous, but it functioned as a highway thanks to the territorial rulers performing these two services.

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Ann had detailed maps of the entire kingdom. Because they were indispensable for traveling, Emma had especially treasured these maps. She regularly updated the maps, writing in new information.

Taking out the detailed map of the western part of the kingdom, Ann checked the location of the closest rest stop. As the sun began to sink, they hurried towards the rest stop, and they were able to make it by the time the sun had set. The rest stop was merely a square fortress with high stone walls. There was no roof. The gate was a drawbridge-type iron door operated using chains. The interior was overgrown with weeds, and wide enough to easily fit 5 wagons.

Basically, travelers could run inside the walls for protection from robbers and wild beasts.

Ann drove the cart into the rest stop surrounded by trees. Then she closed the iron door.

Ann was tired from being rattled all day by the cart for the first time in half a year. She decided to go to sleep early.

She took out two tanned leather mats and two blankets that were stored under the driver's seat. Ann spread one set out next to the cart, to use herself. Then she handed the other set to Shall.

“Chose for yourself where you want to sleep. Spread this out and use it to lay on. And this is for dinner. I’m sorry it’s not much, but we can’t afford luxury on the road.”

She then handed Shall a cup full of grape wine and an apple.

Taking the rest of their journey into consideration, she’d decided to be thrifty with their dinner.

Ann covered herself with the blanket, bit into the apple, and within moments she’d devoured it completely. Throwing the core far away, she gulped down the wine. The cold bitterness soon turned to warmth as it moved into her stomach. She curled up on the mat, feeling her ears heat up a bit.

Shall spread out his mat a short distance away from Ann’s, sat down and covered his lap with the blanket. Holding the cup of wine in one hand, he gazed up at the moon.

There was a full moon tonight. The light of the moon illuminated Shall’s face. Bathed in moonlight, the fairy’s elegance was further polished. It was like a jewel, wet with dew and glimmering enchantingly.

The wing on his back also shined a gentle, transparent light green color.

It appeared that, unlike the one that was plucked off, the wing on Shall’s back changed color and luminosity subtly depending on his mood.

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*Are the wings on fairies' backs warm? Or are they cold?*

She was suddenly overwhelmed with the desire to touch it and see.

“Fairies’ wings sure are beautiful. Is it okay for me to touch it?”

While asking, she reached out her hand. At this, Shall’s wing trembled, rippled slightly, then beat upon the grass two, three times.

As Ann snatched back her hand with a gasp, Shall glared at her with sharp eyes.

“Don’t touch me. Aside from the wing in your hands, the rest is mine.”

In the face of this cold fury, Ann remembered that she possessed his wing. And that, to a fairy, their wings were as precious as their life.

“I’m sorry. That was thoughtless of me.”

She apologized sincerely, and, while examining Shall’s face in profile, gripped the string to the leather pouch that hung down the front of her chest.

A fairy’s wings were the source of their life force, like a heart was to a human. Using a fairy involved holding another person’s heart in the palm of your hand, and threatening to crush it if they didn’t do as you said.

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That was what Ann was doing. From a fairy's point of view, it must have seemed like the act of a demon.

Ann sighed softly.

*----I hate this.*

Perhaps she could get Shall to do as she asked without acting like that.

If, for example, she were able to make friends with him? In that case, there would be no need to use him. She would be able to ask him a favor and get him to agree to help her of his own free will.

“Hey, Shall... I have a proposal for you...”

Ann lifted her head a bit.

“I said so this afternoon too, but why don't we try being friends?”

“Are you an idiot?”

Answering brusquely[7], Shall turned his face away.

Ann laid her head down on the blanket, depressed.

*----It's probably no use, right away. But I have the feeling that if I'm sincere towards him, some day he'll come to understand. At any rate, I wonder what he's thinking about while looking at the moon. His eyes are so beautiful...*

Her eyelids grew heavy, and Ann dozed off to sleep.

In the comfortable darkness, Ann began to dream.

As always, the setting was that of camping out.

Ann was wrapped up in a blanket, and Emma was moving about busily, coming and going in and out of the cart.

Seeing Emma right before her eyes, Ann felt a sense of relief. At the same time, something hot traced a line down her cheeks.

“There, there, Ann. What’s wrong? Does it hurt somewhere?”

“That’s not it. I had a bad dream. A bad dream that you died, mama.”

“That’s silly. Having a dream like that means you’re not feeling well. I’ll check and see if you have a fever.”

Emma’s cool hand softly touched Ann’s neck. Those fingers were long and slender, and always cool. That was because she cooled her fingertips in water when handling silver sugar, which melted easily.



“Just now you were touching my neck...”

That’s when Ann noticed that the leather string hanging around her neck was sticking out from the collar of her dress. That leather string was the one from which the bag containing Shall’s wing hung.

“Shall. Don’t tell me... You tried to steal your wing?”

“I almost got it,” he said with no trace of reluctance.

“You really did try to steal it?! That’s horrible...”

“What is?”

“I said so, didn’t I? That I wanted to be friends with you. And yet, you...”

Ann really wanted to be friends with Shall. And yet, she felt that those feelings had been betrayed, and that made her sad. Meeting Ann’s eyes, Shall laughed mockingly.

“You want to be *friends*? You’re holding the other person’s life in the palm of your hand, and you say you want to be *friends*??”

At these words, Ann was taken aback.

“I was purchased by you. I’m being used by you. It’s not possible for us to be friends.”

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If Ann wanted to make her ideal into a reality, she would have to return his wing to him first, and then ask him to be her friend and beg for his help. That was the only way.

But, to be honest, she was afraid to return his wing. That's why Ann asked him to be her friend while holding his life in her hands. Even she knew that it was asking too much. There was no way he'd be friends with her, given their current relationship.

As long as she possessed his wing, she was his master.

Shall had merely done what was only natural for a fairy and tried to take back his wing from his master.

Thinking that she'd been "betrayed" and getting sad and so on was barking up the wrong tree.

The truth was that Ann was simply a foolish master for letting her guard down.

"I really am an idiot, huh?"

She sighed lightly. Ann had been doing nothing more than trying to make herself feel better by thinking "It would be fine if we were be friends." She realized now how selfish and stupid she'd been.

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Even with his eyes turned towards the moon, Shall Fen Shall was aware of Ann's presence as she lay behind him. She radiated nervousness. The way things were now, even if she did fall back asleep, she'd probably wake up immediately as soon as she sensed his approach. It would be impossible to steal his wing tonight.

But he wasn't in a hurry.

Since falling into the hands of the fairy hunters, he'd been sold from human to human.

Shall had spent all that time thinking only of killing his master and running away.

But it wasn't that easy. These humans were cruel, and wary.

Since being put up for sale at the fairy market in Redington, he'd worked hard to ensure he'd be bought by an idiot. If an idiot bought him, he could kill them, or perhaps he'd distract them and take back his wing, and then he could run away.

However, the customers who came looking for a warrior fairy were all shrewd and cruel-looking. That's why, every time the customers would enter into negotiations with the fairy merchant, he did everything he could to act nasty and scare them off.

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*I wonder what kind of customer will come today. I hope it's an idiot.* While Shall leisurely sat wishing this, he'd suddenly sensed a sweet smell right under his nose. He felt it was similar to the scent of silver sugar.

When he raised his eyes, a thin young girl with hair the color of an ear of wheat was staring over at him.

She announced that she wanted to buy a warrior fairy. It was a one-in-a-million chance.

When Ann had decided to buy him, he'd smiled inwardly.

She was a little girl, treating him like a friend and constantly saying childish things like "Let's be friends." He wouldn't even need to bloody his sword. He predicted that he'd soon be able to take his wing back easily.

But Ann was more sensitive than he'd thought, and he'd been noticed.

He'd tried to steal his wing. He was sure he'd be punished by having his wing hurt, at the very least.

But Ann hadn't punished him. On the contrary, she'd promised once again that she'd return his wing when they arrived in Lewiston, and she'd said that she'd ask him afterwards to be friends.

It was mysterious. He didn't know what she was thinking. However...

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*----No matter what she's thinking, she's an idiot.*

With a girl this naive, there'd likely be hundreds of chances. There was no need to rush.

He'd been being used by humans for almost 70 years. Whether he became free a day from now or 3 days from now, it didn't matter.

Suddenly he again smelled that sweet scent. He glanced behind him. That scent was certainly coming from Ann's hair and her fingertips. It was the scent of silver sugar that stimulated his memories and agitated his senses.

Shall unconsciously touched his fingers to his lips. It was a sweet sensation that he'd experienced in the distant past. The pleasure of having his wing tenderly stroked... Those gentle fingers... Remembering that sensation in the sinews of his back, he involuntarily let out a sigh.

*----Liz...*

Behind him, Ann turned over in her sleep. Shaken to his senses by this, Shall took his fingers away from his lips.

He glanced over his shoulder at Ann. She had her eyes closed.

“Mama, please! Don't go away!”

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Earlier, Ann had shouted that as she opened her eyes. At this, he experienced a moment of doubt.

*----What is her mother doing, letting a little girl like this travel all alone?*

The hand gripping Shall's fingers had been so terribly helpless.

For some reason, that sensation remained distinctly in his heart.

//END OF CHAPTER 1.

### **Notes of Translation:**

[1] 城下町 - Literally “town below the castle.” This is a city that developed gradually due to the presence of the castle.

[2] 使役する - In Japanese this word is a general term for “to employ.” However I am using the word “to use” in this translation, since in this story fairies are enslaved and made to work against their will. I feel that using “to employ” to refer to use of slaves is not appropriate.

[3] 使役者 - Literally this means “employer,” but once again, since we’re talking about slavery, not employment, I’m using the word “master.”

[4] 吐き捨てるように言う - This phrase describes saying something as if “puking” it up and “throwing [it] away (in the garbage).”

[5] 品評会 - A yearly competitive exhibition of silver sugar craftsmen and women’s best work. The winner of the competition will be awarded the title of Silver Sugar Master.

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[6] This is a play on words. In Ann's sentence she uses the word 花盛り ("hanazakuri"), a poetic word that refers to "blossoming" via puberty into a physically and emotionally mature adult, but Shall pulls out the 盛り part of the word, which by itself is a completely different word (pronounced "mori") meaning "bounty, a large serving" and says she's lacking in that department. Basically he's making fun of her for being flat-chested.

[7] 切って捨てるように答える - This phrase literally describes "answering as if cutting [something] off and throwing it away."

**Extra note:**

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## **Chapter 2: Reunion on the Bloody Highway**

There were no towns or villages along the Bloody Highway. In total, it was about 1200 caron in length.

Would they make it across safely?

Ann stole a glance at Shall's face as he sat beside her on the driver's seat.

It was a beautiful face. She'd never seen a warrior fairy with such an elegant appearance before. It made her uneasy.

She wondered if Shall would really be useful as a warrior fairy.

*----Since I already bought him, I have no choice but to believe in him, but...*

The Sugar Sculpture Festival was at the end of autumn, half a month from now. It would take 9 more days to finish crossing the bloody highway. After they arrived in the imperial capital of Lewiston, there would be 5 days left until the festival to prepare. It would be cutting it close.

The next day, they left as the sun was just coming up.

They were still at the very beginning of the highway. The road was long, and their time was limited.

Ann wanted to gain as much distance as possible during the relative safety of daylight.

From time to time she saw black figures that looked like a pack of wolves on a far off rocky outcropping. However, the wolves made no move to come bearing down from the mountains. Up until just past noon, they progressed favorably along the highway.

In just a few more hours, it would be sunset.

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The plan was to arrive at the rest stop where they would spend the second night with time to spare.

Once they arrived there, they'd have travelled 200 caron since entering the highway.

That would make their journey 1/6th complete.

As they continued to plod along amongst the quiet and monotonous scenery, Ann suddenly heard the sound of a horse neighing. At the same time, the high pitched sound of iron clashing together seemed to pierce through the air, reaching her ears.

Startled, Ann tugged on the reins without thinking. As the cart slowly came to a stop, she gazed out into the distance.

There was dust in the air on the road ahead of them.

At the center of the cloud of dust was a brand new box-shaped wagon. Since the back of the wagon was facing towards them, Ann couldn't see the figure on the driver's seat. She could, however, make out the sight of hands swinging swords on the other side of the wagon.

There were 10 riders circling around the circumference of the wagon, making strange, gleeful noises. They wore varying outfits, but each had a cloth tied around his head, hiding his face. These were bandits who attacked travelers.

"This is bad!"

Ann grew pale. When one laid eyes on bandits, the only course of action was to flee. She couldn't help the person who was being attacked right in front of her. The outcome was certain.

Travelers were all aware that this was the rule, and would not begrudge each other for sticking to it.

In this case, it would be wise for Ann to flee into a rest stop. However, the rest stop where they stayed the previous night was far behind them.

She looked around on both sides of the road to see if there was any place to hide, but the area was a wasteland of tall grasses continuing on in all directions. There weren't any tall groves of trees. There was no where to hide the carriage.

Just as she came to this conclusion, two of the riders from the ring of bandits stopped moving.

Seemingly having spotted Ann's carriage, they turned their horses in her direction.

"Oh no, they're coming over here!!"

Letting out a cry, Ann gripped the sleeve of Shall, who sat next to her. That's when she finally remembered.

"Ah-- you!! That's right, Shall!! You're a warrior fairy, aren't you?! Chase away the bandits."

Shall looked at Ann wearily.

"That's troublesome..."

"If you don't we're going to be killed! Please!!"

At this, Shall grabbed Ann's wrist and removed her hand from his sleeve. Conversely, he took Ann's arm and pulled her roughly towards him.

"Shall?! Wh-what?!"

Shall leaned in with his face close to hers, and whispered mockingly, “You’re not supposed to be requesting, but ordering, right?”

Even in this kind of situation, her gaze was drawn to Shall’s eyes, drilling into hers, and his long eyelashes. Furthermore, his voice sounded as sweet as a lover’s whisper.

“Wha-- Too close! Hold on, Shall, you’re too close!! Get back! Anyways, go already!”

Blood rushed to her cheeks. This was no time to be blushing. But she couldn’t conceal her agitation.

“Your face is red.”

“A-a-a-anyways!! Please?!”

“This is amusing.”

Shall chuckled, making fun of her. This was undoubtedly hazing.

“Shall! Please, go!!”

“I’m telling you to give me an order.”

“‘An order’?! Look, they’re coming!!”

“‘Go immediately. I’ll tear your wing.’ If you say that, I’ll go right away.”

“What are you talking about!? Enough already, just go!”

She was stunned, and not used to using a fairy. For that reason, the fact that she possessed his wing, which might as well have been his heart, flew right out of her head.



“Order it.”

She squeezed her eyes shut so that she couldn't see Shall's beautiful face. Then...

“Go[1]! If you don't, I'll punch you!!”

For the time being, she tried ordering him, using every bit of violence she could muster up.

At her order, Shall shrugged his shoulders.

“I guess that'll do... I'll go. As you wish, Milady Scarecrow.”

Letting go of Ann's arm, Shall leapt lightly down from the carriage.

Shall turned slowly and began to walk towards the riders that were coming barreling towards them.

Gracefully extending his right arm out in front of his chest, Shall narrowed his eyes as if he were smiling. The single wing on his back trembled slightly. Then, the drooping wing slowly flapped open. Parts of it shimmered with rainbow light, reflecting the sun. At this, from all around him shimmering particles of light gathered towards his open palm. As Ann watched, the particles of light condensed into a long, slender shape, forming a gleaming silver sword.

*----A sword?! He has an ability like that?! In that case, Shall really is...*

*----A warrior fairy.*

Suddenly, Shall broke into a run.

Soundlessly, quieter than the wind, he ran, crouched low to the ground.

Running up to the bandits' horses in the blink of an eye, Shall swung his sword at the legs of two of the horses.

With that single swing, he cut the front legs off both horses simultaneously. The horses collapsed immediately, and the bandits were thrown to ground.

Without even pausing to confirm this, Shall turned to run towards the remaining horsemen milling about.

The other bandits noticed Shall's presence and turned towards him. In an instant, their horse's legs were cut out from under them, one after another. Simultaneously, 5 horses collapsed.

The bandits handling the remaining 3 horses let out angry cries and slashed out at Shall.

With a downward swing of his sword, Shall cut the arm off of a bandit. The bandits' leader's face changed colors.

“Retreat!! Retreat!!”

As the leader shouted, he turned his horse toward the foot of the mountains. The bandits who'd been thrown to the ground scrambled after him. The man whose arm had been cut off also, while moaning in pain, desperately set his horse to a run.

The cloud of dust was briskly blown away by the wind.

A silence fell on the scene of 7 struggling horses with their legs cut off, and the dead bodies of 3 bandits who'd been killed when they were thrown to the ground.

Shall waved the sword lightly, shaking off the blood. Then, moving slowly, he thrust the sword into the necks of the struggling horses one by one, until finally they'd all stopped breathing.

Ann's fingertips were cold, and she was trembling slightly.

She averted her gaze in order not to see the horses Shall had finished off. Wounded that gravely, the horses couldn't be saved. Rather than letting them suffer unnecessarily, it was more compassionate to kill them.

Although she knew that, she couldn't look directly at them.

After all, Ann had been the one to tell Shall to save her.

However, she hadn't thought that it would result in 7 horses and 3 people being killed in the blink of an eye. With just one word from her 3 people, bandits though they may have been, had died.

She felt shock and fear that this had been the result of her order.

*----So this is what they call a Warrior Fairy...*

While Ann remained for a long moment without moving, the driver got down from the driver's seat of the box-shaped wagon in front of her.

Ann recognized who that driver was, and she couldn't believe her eyes.

"It can't be-- Jonas?!"

At the sound of Ann's voice, Jonas, who was in a daze, watching Shall deliver the final blows to the horses, raised his head.

"...Eh?...Ann?"

When Shall had finished off all of the horses, he lowered the sword in his hand. Just like when it had formed, the sword steadily turned into particles of light and dispersed.

While doing her best not to look at the tragic scene of the dead bodies of the horses and bandits, Ann moved the cart forward, avoiding the corpses.

When she pulled up even with Jonas's wagon, she stopped the horses.

Ann got down from the driver's seat and ran up to Jonas.

"What's going on, Jonas?!"

"Ann! Is he a fairy you're using?! So you're the one who saved me?! This must also be fate! In any case, I'm glad I was able to meet you. Since you left half a day before me, I thought you'd be far ahead by now."

Seemingly excited, Jonas grabbed Ann's hands and gripped them with both of his own, as if enveloping her hands with his.

"I made a detour to Redington... But, that's not the point. Jonas, what are you doing in a place like this?"

"I came after you. It would be dangerous to let you travel by yourself. That's why I persuaded my parents, readied a wagon, and followed you. I'm going with you."

"Why?!"

"What do you mean, 'why'? There can only be one reason, right? You should know how I feel about you."

At his words, Ann was astounded.

"Eh?"

"I love you. I want to go with you."

"Um... Jonas, I... I'm really happy, but..."

Ann gently tugged her hands out of Jonas's grip.

“But I think you’ve greatly misunderstood your own feelings, Jonas. After all, no matter how you look at it, a person like you shouldn’t be in love with a person like me. There’s just no way. I think you’ve probably misunderstood your sympathy towards me for love.”

Ann was very ordinary-looking, and she wasn’t the type to act winsomely.

Even by her own reckoning, she was in short supply of womanly charm.

The truth was that although Jonas and Ann had spent the last 6 months together, their relationship had been more like that of mere acquaintances than that of friends.

And yet, Jonas had proposed to Ann, who’d always felt an ambiguous sense of distance between them.

She couldn’t think of any other reason except that he felt sympathy towards her because of her mother’s death.

It was probably the case that Jonas felt excessively bad for her, to the point where the difference between compassion and love became cloudy, and misunderstood that he’d fallen head over heels in love with her.

“It’s not sympathy, I love you, Ann. Say, you’re going to participate in the silver sugar festival in Lewiston, right? That’s what you said. In that case, I’ll go too. I’ll protect you and help you out, so that you can become a silver sugar master.”

“Hold on. Just now you were attacked by bandits-- you can’t protect yourself, much less me, right?! Besides, you’re the precious heir to a sugar candy shop, and there’s even the possibility you’ll one day become the leader of the Radcliffe guild, right?! I can’t let a person like that come with me on a dangerous journey, what if you were injured?! I wouldn’t be able to face Mr. and Mrs. Anders who were so kind to me.”

“About the bandits, well... I let my guard down a little, but... I’m a man, after all, so it’ll be okay.”

“I don’t understand how ‘it will be okay’ at all!!”

“I’ll be okay. Really, it’ll be okay. And, anyways, I have a sword.”

“Are you listening to anything I’m saying?!”

“Besides, mother and father both approved of me going to Lewiston with you.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Anders agreed? That can’t be... Anyways, you should head back.”

“I can’t turn back now. Heading back would be just as dangerous as going forward.”

In his enthusiasm, Jonas was enflamed like a person with a fever. [2]

There was no doubt that Jonas genuinely was mistaking sympathy for love.

Nothing would give her more of a guilty conscience than letting Jonas get killed because of these mistaken feelings.

“You can’t. You absolutely have to go back.”

“Ann, don’t say such cold things!”

Jonas laughed and gripped Ann’s hand again.



Ann was surprised and tried to pull her hand back, but he had a hold of it firmly.

“I came here for your sake. Do you hate me? Aren’t you happy?”

Under his gaze, she was flustered. His gentle smile would’ve had the other girls in the village floating on air.

“It’s not that I hate you. But, but... How should I put it... That’s not the problem...”

Shall leaned against the wagon, looking up at the sky seemingly uninterested in interrupting their conversation. However, he suddenly knit his brows and pulled his back away from the wagon.

“Scarecrow. Let’s quickly leave this place. Wolves will come, drawn in by the scent of blood. Look up.”

Ann and Jonas looked up at the sky. The shadows of 3 black birds circled above their heads.

“Wild Crows. They’re the clean up crew of the wilderness. When they appear, the wolves won’t be far behind.”

Ann nodded quickly. She withdrew her hand from Jonas’s, which had gone limp.

“I understand. We’ll depart immediately. Jonas, please, turn back now.”

“No, I’m going with you.”

“Jonas, if you die your parents will cry, and the girls of the village will cry even more. If you’re gone, who will inherit the shop? You have a lot of things that are important to you, don’t you? They are what you should be protecting.”



Ann put her whole heart into these words. But Jonas gazed unwaveringly back at her.

“Even if you say I shouldn’t, I’m going. My parents have nothing to do with this. The shop doesn’t matter to me right now, either. All that matters to me at this moment is my feelings for you.”

Jonas had a warm home. He had a family, and a shop that he would inherit in the future. He had so many important things right there in his hands. His was not an empty existence like Ann’s, where there was not even one person who would cry if she died. He was a human who, unlike Ann, had no need to go up against such danger.

Even so, he made no attempt to appreciate the value of what he had.

Given this, Ann had just about run out of patience for Jonas’s stubbornness.

“In any case, you aren’t a person who should be acting so recklessly, Jonas.”

Ann turned her back to him, and quickly climbed up onto the driver’s seat.

Shall was already seated on the driver’s seat. Glancing sideways at Ann as she applied the whip to the horses with an irritated expression on her face, Shall grinned mockingly.

“So there’s really a man who would come chasing after you? Not too bad, for a child.”

“I’m not a child! I’m 15 years old-- an adult! Besides, Jonas and I aren’t like that. He’s just feeling sympathy towards me. Though I still can’t believe he put himself in such danger out of compassion.”

Even while saying this, Ann paid attention to what was happening behind them.

Jonas had climbed up onto his own wagon, and was slowly moving it forward, following after them. It seemed he really had no intention of returning to the village.

In the first place, since he'd already come this far along the highway, it was as Jonas had said: it was just as dangerous to go back as to continue forward.

“What should I do...?” Ann whispered, and then said to Shall with a sigh, “About the wagon behind us... For the time being, if something should happen, will you go to help him?”

Ann didn't hate Jonas. On the contrary, she was fond of his gentle smile and manner. Besides, she thought that someone who was so sympathetic towards others as to mistake those feelings for love must be a good person.

It wasn't as if she could just abandon him.

“If you want me to do something, use my wing to order me.”

“You were being noisy earlier too, saying ‘Order me, Order me.’ Why?”

“I have no intention of doing things other than what I'm ordered to do.”

Basically, he was saying that he wouldn't do as she asked unless she threatened him to the extent of saying 'If you don't obey this order, I'll take your life.' To put it another way, it meant that he would obey only an order that extreme.

He intended to obstinately disobey frivolous orders like ‘Watch the horses for a minute’ and ‘Hand me that blanket.’

To Ann, having to threaten to kill him in order to get him to hand her a blanket was troublesome.

He was going to be a handful, she realized with a sigh.

“I resolved last night that I *will* use you. However, I do not wish to give you orders in such a fundamentally vile way. So, this is a request. From now on, as well, I will start with a request. But if you say no, I’ll change it to an order. As you wish, I’ll say ‘If you don’t want to have your wing torn, do as I say.’ I’m prepared to do it, if need be. But I will always start with a request.”

At these words, Shall stared fixedly at Ann.

“You really are a complete scarecrow-brain.”

“Shall, since earlier, you’ve been using the chaotic situation to get away with calling me ‘Scarecrow’... But I’m fine with it, now. Go ahead and call me Scarecrow, I don’t care.”

Ann wondered what she should do if something happened to Jonas. Because thinking about it made her head hurt, she had no energy left to fend off Shall’s name-calling.

Ann stopped the wagon. As she did, Jonas pulled his wagon up next to hers, and came to a stop as well. The two of them were looking up at the rest stop that Ann had chosen as the place they’d sleep on the 2nd night of their journey.

“So this is a rest stop? Tonight will be my first time using one.”

“This is your first time staying at a rest stop? Then what did you do last night?

“To be honest, until this afternoon I had a guard. There was a man on the outskirts of Knoxberry village doing crude labor; I hired him to be my guard.

So last night I stopped the wagon by the side of the road and slept inside. He did protect me for one night, but...”

“But?”

“It seems he saw where I hid the money inside the wagon. Before noon the next day he held me at sword point while he stole the money and ran away.”

Jonas related this tale relatively nonchalantly. Either he was brave, or he was an air-head. Ann’s shoulders slumped with disappointment.

“That’s unfortunate... But didn’t you let your guard down a bit too much?”

“Yeah, you might be right... But, all’s well that ends well. At least I got away with my life. And thanks to that, I was able to meet up with you, Ann.”

It seemed that he had no idea of the danger of traveling.

If he was going to travel with her, she would have to instill that sense of urgency in him or there would be trouble.

“Jonas, stay here tonight and turn back tomorrow, okay?”

“I’m just going where I want to go. It’s not as if I’m following you, or anything.”

“But, Jo—nas...”

“Well, let’s get going.”

Jonas winked and applied the whip to the horses. Ann clutched her forehead.

“Ahh... My head hurts...”

They drove the two wagons into the rest stop, and closed the iron gate.

Once they were inside the rest stop, Jonas parked his wagon near the wall, as if holding back. Then he immediately disappeared into the back of the wagon. It seemed he intended to sleep in there. Not parking his wagon near Ann’s seemed to be his way of insisting that he wasn’t being clingy and following Ann around.

Ann built a fire near the wagon. Then she put water, dried meat and vegetable scraps into a pot, making a simple soup.

When it was done, she glanced over at Jonas’s wagon.

Autumn though it may have been, at night the temperature dropped. Ann didn’t feel right about her and Shall being the only ones eating a hot meal.

Ann ladled some soup into a wooden bowl and approached Jonas’s wagon.

She knocked lightly on the double doors at the back of the wagon.

“Jonas, it’s me. Open up.”

From inside there came some kind of rustling noise, and before long the doors opened.

“Do you have some business here?”

The person who opened the doors was a young, female fairy about the size of a human’s palm. She clung to the handle, moving her single wing with all her might.

The young, female fairy was Kathy, a labor fairy being used by the Anders family. Her hair was so red it looked like it was on fire. She further raised her standoffish, upturned nose and glared at Ann with large, upwards-slanted eyes.

“Kathy?! You were able to come with Jonas?”

“In the first place, I am Jonas-sama’s personal labor fairy. It’s only to be expected.”

“Oh, really? And where is Jonas?”

“He is resting.”

“Then I’ll just give you this soup to give to him. Would you tell him to eat it once he wakes up?”

Looking at the bowl that Ann held out to her, Kathy sneered.

“Something as crude as this... It won’t likely suit Jonas-sama’s tastes.”

It was exactly the attitude that servants working for nobles sometimes got, appropriating the mantle of their master’s authority to look down on others. Ann knit her brows.

“That may be the case at home, but on the road even this is something to be grateful for.”

Kathy made an unpleasant face, but descended lightly to the floor and held out both hands.

Fairies who’d had one wing plucked off couldn’t fly. They also couldn’t stay floating in mid-air, so Kathy had no choice but to descend to the ground to take the bowl.

Ann crouched down, and passed the bowl to her.

For Kathy, the bowl was big enough to be a bathtub. Holding the bowl in her arms, Kathy wrinkled up her face.

“It stinks like animal fat. Even a fairy like me wouldn’t like this.”

“Oh really... *Sooo sorry* for the imposition!”

Ann returned to the fire, fuming, and violently stirred the pot.

Shall was sitting leisurely, staring into the flames.

Taking a bowl in her hand, Ann ladled out Shall's portion of soup. Then she thrust the bowl out at him wordlessly.

After gazing fixedly at the bowl in front of his eyes, Shall turned to Ann with a mysterious expression on his face.

“This is...? What do you want me to do with it?”

Ann glared at Shall severely.

“Do you think I'm giving this to you because I want you to say ‘Say ‘Ah~!’” and feed me by hand?! Obviously this is your serving, right?! Was it wrong of me to give you something like this?! Is this low-class soup that reeks of animal fat not suited to your tastes either?!”

At Ann's sudden outburst, Shall made a surprised face.

“What is it, all of a sudden? You practically have smoke coming out of your ears.”

“Because I'm just a scarecrow-brain! They are highly flammable, right?!”



As if he'd become unable to repress it any longer, Shall laughed slightly. Then, with a gentle expression on his face, he stretched out his hand towards the proffered bowl.

“That’s some fire.”

“I feel as if I could burst into flame! I was just told by a fairy that a crude soup like this isn’t suited to the tastes of the high and mighty heir to a sugary candy shop. Is this crude soup not good enough for you, either?!”

“It’s not that there’s anything wrong with the soup. I was just... surprised.”

Shall accepted the soup, and cupped the bowl with both hands.

“Surprised? At what? Perhaps at the fact that the soup looked incredibly bad, or something...?”

“I was surprised that you served me before serving yourself.”

“Why? It’s only natural that the person serving will give soup to others before taking some for themselves, right? That’s just good manners. Here, here’s a spoon.”

Ann went to give Shall a spoon to scoop the soup with, but then she noticed that the soup in the bowl in his hands had already decreased by half.

“Shall, you haven’t drunk from the bowl, right? Could it be that there’s a hole in it?”

“I ate the soup.”

“You ate it?! How?!”

“We don’t eat with our mouths. We hold our hands over the food, or touch it, and absorb it that way.”

As she watched the bowl in Shall’s hands, the surface of the soup rippled slightly, and it steadily decreased in volume. It appeared as if the soup were rapidly evaporating.

“Can you taste it?” Ann asked unconsciously, while staring fixedly at the scene before her.

“No. Even if we eat food, we don’t perceive any flavor.”

“All fairies are like that?! In that case, no matter what you eat, you can’t enjoy it, right?! You don’t taste any flavor from any foods at all?”

“Just one. There’s one food with a flavor we can perceive.”

“What it is?”

“Silver sugar. It’s... sweet.”

As if he'd suddenly remembered something, Shall cast his eyes downward. That expression was terribly lonely. It must have been a painful memory.

Until being put up for sale in the marketplace, what kinds of things had this foul-mouthed fairy experienced? Just imagining it made her heart ache.

He'd likely been born in nature and was living as he wished, when suddenly he found himself being chased down, captured and sold.

What that must have felt like... Ann thought that if it were her, she'd probably seethe with resentment.

“Do you like silver sugar? Do you dislike it?”

“I don't hate it.”

“Then I'll make I'll make a sugar sculpture for you. I'm a novice sugar craftsman, you see.”

“You are?”

Shall looked at Ann sideways, skeptically. Ann puffed out her chest slightly.

“Listen and be amazed! My mother was a silver sugar master. As her daughter, I've been playing with silver sugar in place of play-dough since I first started toddling. My skills are pretty impressive, if I do say so myself. Perhaps I'll make a sculpture of grass in the moonlight that will suit you.”

Tasteless food couldn't be any fun. At that thought, Ann suddenly wanted to make a sugar sculpture for him.

If Shall really was seething with resentment, perhaps the gentle sweetness of a sugar sculpture might be able to soften his heart a bit.

Bewilderment flashed across Shall's face. Ann thought that that troubled-looking expression of his was kind of cute.

Smiling, Ann stood and circled around to the back of her own wagon. Just as she stretched out her hands toward the double doors on the back of the wagon...

*Crash!* The sound of something falling over inside the wagon rang out through the air, and the impact rocked the entire structure.

Ann leapt back instantaneously and let out a shriek.

“Shall!”

Flying back to Shall's side, Ann grabbed his sleeve.

“T-there's something inside the wagon! Go look. Please, go look!”

At this, Shall glanced at Ann.

“Is that an order?”

“An order?”

“If I don’t go and look, are you going to tear my wing?”

“I wasn’t thinking of anything like that, but...”

“Then do it yourself.”

“Ahhh, you---!!”

Since brutality such as threatening to tear his wing was unpleasant to her, Ann clearly couldn’t order him.

Shall, seeing through these thoughts of hers, was telling her to “order” him. From his mildly mocking expression, that much was apparent. He thoroughly intended to do as little as possible.

She was a fool for thinking, even for a moment, that he was cute.

Ann’s temper flared up, but thanks to that anger, her fear subsided.

“Fine! See if I don’t go look!”

Ann hadn’t been traveling all throughout the kingdom with her mother for the last 15 years for nothing.

She had every intention of showing more nerve than just any 15 year old miss.

Taking up the fire poking stick, Ann went to stand in front of the wagon doors.

Ann held the fire poking stick at the ready in one hand. Slowly, she opened the doors.

The inside of the wagon was quiet.

The ceiling of the wagon was high enough that a person could walk around inside. On the walls on both sides, at a point near the ceiling, there were long, thin windows to let in light. Because the moon was bright tonight, moonlight came streaming in through these windows, illuminating the interior of the wagon with faint light.

On top of the worktable that was stationed along one wall, there was a stone slab upon which to kneed sugar candies, a wooden spatula and a set of scales. Bottles of color flakes[3] extracted from various plants were lined up in a neat row.

Five barrels were lined up along the opposite wall.

The interior of the wagon was the same as always.

“There’s... nothing here?”

Fearfully, fearfully Ann stuck her neck into the wagon and peered around. Just then...

“Hey, you!!”

Together with the shrill voice, a small shadow hopped down from above the work station.

“KYAAAAAAAAAAAA!!”

Letting out a shriek, Ann lashed out with the stick with all her might.

It connected marvelously with the shadow that came flying straight at her.

Given the force with which it was hit, the shadow went flying right out of the wagon and crashed into the back of Shall’s head as he set near the fire.

After suddenly being attacked from behind, Shall turned around with the corners of his eyes drawn up in alarm.

Shall grabbed the little shadow, which had fallen limply to the ground after the impact, by its collar and picked it up.

“Is this your idea of a joke?!” he shouted at Ann.

She was also bewildered, and shouted back angrily, “I don’t know what it is!! It was in the back of the wagon!”

“This was...?”

Shall turned his gaze to the thing in his grasp. Then he knit his brows.

“Let me go, you bastard! Just who do you think I am?!” the little shadow protested in a high-pitched voice.

The creature who kicked and struggled while being held up by his collar was a blond fairy in the shape of a cherubic young man. There was a single wing on his back. Strangely, another wing was wrapped around his neck like a scarf.

“Lemme go!!”

“So noisy.”

Shall let go suddenly. The little fairy fell to the ground, letting out a shriek.

“Tch. What a violent fellow. I’m delicate, you know. Treat me more gently!”

He stood up, rubbing his behind. Ann approached timidly, then knelt and peered down at the fairy. The fairy looked up at Ann with wide blue eyes. Ann approached timidly, then knelt and peered down at the fairy. The fairy looked up at Ann with wide blue eyes.





“You were the one thrashing about inside the wagon, right?”

“I wasn’t thrashing around. I was taking a nap, when this delicate me had a nightmare and bolted awake. I just bolted awake a little too high, and crashed into the ceiling, that’s all...”

“Ah...You must have bolted up pretty high indeed... In any case, who are you? When, and why did you get into my wagon?”

“My name is Mythrill Reed Pod[5]. I’ve come to repay a favor to you.”

“Repay a favor?”

“Yesterday, you saved me. So I’ve come to fulfill my obligation to you.”  
Hearing this, Ann finally recognized him.

“Ah! It’s you! The fairy who was being bullied by the fairy hunter in Redington, that was you?”

At that time, he’d been covered in mud and she hadn’t gotten a good look at his face. But if she remembered very, very carefully, that shrill voice of his sounded familiar.

There was no doubt that the wing the fairy had wrapped around his neck was the one that Ann had taken back from the fairy hunter.

“That’s right. I saw your wagon in Redington and slipped inside. It was all in order to repay the favor to you. I was thinking that I could repay the favor right away, but... I was exhausted from being worked to the bone by that idiot, you see. I accidentally fell asleep, and... slept until now. But, thanks to that, I’m as good as new! Starting right now, I’m going to marvelously repay the favor I owe you!”

“But, at that time, didn’t you say that you’d never thank a human?”

“That’s what I said. But it’s a fact that you saved my life. I don’t want to become a compassionless creature like a human, so even though it’s unpleasant I’ll repay the favor. I’ll say this in advance, but even though I’m going to repay the favor, I’ll die before I say thank you. Got it?!”

He stabbed out with his tiny index finger towards Ann. Being pointed at so directly, Ann was bewildered.

“Uh, um... How should I put it... I didn’t save you because I wanted you to be beholden to me, or anything, so you don’t need to repay the favor. Especially if it’s unpleasant to you, and you’d rather die than say thank you, and so on... When you put it like that, I’m not sure whether you’re grateful or not...”

“You saved him? You’re quite the bleeding heart, aren’t you, Scarecrow?”  
Shall said in disbelief.

“Well, it’s not as if I could just watch him be killed, could I? Um, you... Mythrill, was it?”

“I’m Mythrill Reed Pod. Don’t shorten it!”

“Ah, s-sorry... In any case, Mythrill Reed Pod, I don’t need you to repay the favor.”

“As if I’d let it go at that! Let me repay the favor!”

At his overblown haughtiness, Ann felt a sudden wave of exhaustion.

“Up until now, I’ve not had much contact with fairies... I’d thought that they’d be sweeter and more gallant. But that’s completely wrong, isn’t it? Look at you, Shall, and Kathy... How did you all get so arrogant?”

“Anyways, let me repay the favor!”

“But there’s really no need.”

“‘No need’? Give me a break! Even if I have to follow you to hell and back, I will get you to let me repay the favor.”

“What do mean ‘follow me to hell’?! That’s too scary! When you put it like that, I don’t know if you’re trying to repay a favor or get revenge! Why do I have to be threatened?!”

“In any case, let me repay the favor. I’m going to follow you around until I’ve repaid the favor.”

“Fine! I get it!! Then, I’ll ask you to do me a favor. Um... Uh...”

Ann looked around at her surroundings searchingly, then suddenly snapped her fingers.

“That’s right! In that case, to repay the favor to me, will you please apply some oil the axel of my wagon for me?”

“Don’t treat me like an idiot! You really intend to have me do something lame like that in exchange for saving my life?! Think of a more impressive favor!”

“An ‘impressive favor’...? Like what?”

To Ann, who was cradling her head in her hands, Shall asked with a chilly expression on his face, “Should I strangle him to death to make him be quiet? I’ll do it if you order me to.”

Given how obscenely noisy Mythrill was, it was impossible to tell from the tone of Shall’s voice whether he was joking or serious.

Hearing this, Mythrill shrieked defensively, “You bastard! What are you saying about a fellow fairy?! Hmph. So you’re an obsidian? You’re just looking down on me because I’m a drop of water, right? Hey, human girl!”

“It’s Ann.”

“Ann. This guy you’re using, he’s a fairy-killer. Give him what he deserves in one decisive swipe, just like you did with that fairy hunter!”

“But...Why are you giving me orders?”

“Because, it looks like he’s going to strangle me to death.”

To Shall, who’d uncharacteristically made such a direct offer, Ann moaned, “Don’t say such stupid things, when I went to all that trouble to save him. In any case, you. Since you are free, I’d like you to go wherever you like and live happily.”

“You want me to go wherever I want?! Are you trying to chase me away?! I won’t go!!”

“That’s not what I meant, but.....Somehow...I’m really tired...I want to go to sleep, already.”

This conversation with a shrieking Mythrill seemed like it would continue on unresolved forever.

Ann was completely worn out, so she turned her back to Mythrill, got ready for bed, and then curled up with her blanket.

“Sorry, Shall, I’ll make your sugar sculpture tomorrow night. As an apology for making you wait, I’ll make it extraordinarily beautiful. If you want to eat a

sugar sculpture, don't try to steal your wing back just because I'm sleeping, okay?"

Regardless of whether or not Shall could be won over with a sugar sculpture, Ann felt that it was a bit shameful to use something like that to set up her defenses.

However, it was a pressing issue. It couldn't be helped, since she would be in trouble if he took his wing back and disappeared.

"You won't need to worry about me taking it or not... I doubt we're going to be able to sleep at all anyways," Shall muttered gloomily.

"Hey, you guys!! Hey, don't go to sleep, don't go to sleep!!"

At the sound of Mythrill's voice, which seemed to stab straight into her ears, Ann covered her ears with both hands.

"I wonder if I couldn't have you do me the favor of letting me sleep tonight...?"

Ann was coming to thoroughly regret her good deed.

"Hey, hey, hey!! Don't you go to sleep too! Aren't you supposed to be my comrade?!"

"If it's a noisy comrade like you, I don't need any."

Fed up with Mythrill Reed Pod, who was jumping about, Shall heaved a sigh of frustration and laid down.

“Wh-wh-wh-what was that?! What was that----?!”

“You want to ‘repay the favor’? Are you an idiot? The other person is a human. Have you forgotten the pain of having your wing plucked off?”

Their wings were the most sensitive part of a fairy’s body. The pain of having their wings plucked off was the same as if their arms and legs had been ripped off.

Being forced to endure that pain was enough to make them hate those creatures known as humans.

But Mythrill snorted derisively.

“What are you saying-- As if I could ever forget such pain. That’s why I’ll never thank a human, even if my life depends on it. But the person who took my wing was not Ann. Ann got my wing back for me. Whether human or fairy, bad people are bad. Good people are good. So, I will repay my debts to good people. So, I will repay my debt to Ann, too! Let me, let me, let me repay the favor!!!”

His way of thinking seemed to be somewhat warped, but in any case it was clear that he was grateful to Ann from the bottom of his heart.



However, whatever else he may have been, Mythrill was extremely loud.  
“Shut up!”

Raising his hand, Shall swatted Mythrill down as he jumped into the air.

Mythrill, who out a shriek as he fell, got back up and with his eyebrows drawn up began to bounce around Shall’s head with even greater agitation.

“I’m opposed to violence!! You fairy-killer! You comrade-killer!!”  
Fairies who’d had one of their wings plucked off became unable to fly. However, by beating their remaining wing and jumping with all their might, they could easily jump over a human’s head.

Making use of that jumping ability, Mythrill leapt about, making an eyesore of himself.

Seeing how it had only increased his boisterousness, Shall realized that it would be wiser not to make any further moves against Mythrill.

Ann, who lay curled up on her side covering her ears with her hands, knit her brows in apparent annoyance.

It seemed Ann had saved this fairy, Mythrill Reed Pod.

She was such a naive girl, it astounded him. She was naive in her dealings with Shall, as well.

Ann had served soup to Shall before taking any for herself. Furthermore, she'd said she would make him a sugar sculpture. She was treating him as if he were a human.

On top of that, Ann wouldn't give Shall stern orders. Her orders didn't surpass the level of requests. It was plain to see that Ann believed she was incapable of hurting his wing. Shall couldn't perceive any determination in her decision to use him.

Being asked to do something was different from being ordered to do it. Which was why, honestly, he was bewildered. Should he obey her, or should he ignore her?

Shall was loathe to obey when he hadn't even been ordered. However, Ann was in possession of his wing. If Ann felt into a predicament, the damage would extend to Shall's wing as well, which was a problem.

Because he was unsure what to do, he'd chased away the bandits.

He absolutely had not done it to obey Ann's order. She was too naive for him to obey.

Why *was* Ann so naive? Perhaps it was because she was lonely. She'd been searching for her mother in her dream, right? There was no way she could not be lonely, travelling all alone. That's probably why she was kind even to fairies. She was likely unconsciously seeking someone to ease her own loneliness.

Tonight Mythrill was shrieking and raising a ruckus, and it didn't look like he'd get the chance to steal his wing from Ann.

*----Well, I guess it doesn't matter.*

He wasn't really given any orders, so he didn't have to do much. All he had to do was watch Ann constantly getting flustered, and laugh. She really was a naive girl.

*----The sugar sculptures made by that Scarecrow must surely be sweet[4].*

The thought suddenly popped into his head.

// Chapter 2, END

**Notes:**

[1]行けってば This is grammatically a command (in the imperative form) but sounds more like an utterance of frustration than an actual order, but apparently it was close enough for Shall.

[2] This simile makes more sense in Japanese, where the word for ‘enthusiasm’ is made up of the characters for ‘fire’ and ‘heart.’

[3] 色粉 “Color Flakes” - These are a type of powdered food coloring that Ann uses to add different colors to her sugar sculptures.

[4] The word for “naive,” 甘い, which Shall uses several times in this chapter to describe Ann, also means “sweet,” which is how he uses it here. He’s assuming that because she’s so 甘い, her sugar sculptures must be as well.

[5] Reed is a kind of plant in English. I thought it was suitable for a fairy's name.



AQUA Scans & Icarus Bride presents:

# Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 1

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Black Fairy”*

Story by Mikawa Miri

Illustrations by Aki

Scans: Mizuouji

Translation: Icarus Bride

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## **Chapter 3. Attack**

Seated next to Ann on the driver's seat was Shall, wearing a sleepy-looking face. Then, as if trying to wedge himself into the crack between Shall and Ann, lay Mythrill curled up sleeping.

Together with the break of day, the box-shaped wagon driven by Ann departed the rest stop.

The night before, Mythrill had continued shrieking all night long. As could be expected, both Ann and Shall had hardly slept at all.

Ann had been soothing a shrieking Mythrill as they departed that morning.

Mythrill shrewdly climbed onto the driver's seat. Ann and Shall, both suffering from a lack of sleep, were silent, and Mythrill, perhaps tired from staying up all night, fell deep asleep, rocked pleasantly by the movement of the wagon.

Looking down at a seemingly comfortable Mythrill, Shall said hatefully, "Should I throw him out while he's sleeping?"

"That's too excessive, don't do it. Besides, even if you throw him out, he'll come back, probably. He was saying he'd follow me to the depths of hell, remember? Until he repays the favor in a way he's satisfied with, we might never be able to get him to let us sleep~~ That is troublesome, but... Now that you mention it, the matter with Jonas is troublesome, too..."

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Jonas followed along behind them with a matter-of-fact look on his face.

After being rocked by the carriage for a short while, Ann checked the location of the sun.

It was about time to take a break, which they'd use to eat lunch at the same time. A small, clear river flowing through the forest that ran alongside the road caught Ann's eye. Spotting an opening in the trees, she drove the wagon through it, into the woods.

Jonas also silently stopped his wagon.

In order to store up water in the barrels lashed to the sides of her wagon, Ann began to arduously scoop water from the river with a bucket.

Jonas watched her doing this for a while, and then seemed to notice that he also needed to stock up on water. He grabbed a bucket and headed towards the stream.

Beside Ann, who leaned over the stream to scoop up water, Jonas likewise bent over.

Noticing his presence, Ann turned her face towards Jonas.

Jonas gazed back at Ann with an uncharacteristically serious expression on his face. Then he said to her hesitantly, "Ann... Can't you understand? I was

worried about you. That's all."

Jonas put his hand into the stream, and touched Ann's hand that was gripping the bucket.

Ann was startled, and reflexively yanked the bucket out of the stream. Even if he treated her like this, she was unsure how to respond and only ended up being troubled by it. However, he was in his own way kindly doing his best for her.

"Ann."

As he called her name, a light sigh leaked from Ann's mouth.

Jonas was a good person. His reckless behavior was also for her sake.

"We've already come 300 caron since entering the bloody highway. That means we've already made it about 1/4th of the way across. At this point, it's more dangerous for you to turn back alone. In that case, it's safer for you to travel the rest of the way to Lewiston with us. Come with us."

At this, a smile flashed across Jonas's face.

"You do understand!"

"In exchange, please understand this: travelling is dangerous."

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“But aren’t you using a warrior fairy, Ann? I don’t think we’ll be in any danger...”

“A warrior fairy isn’t necessarily invincible. Don’t rely on Shall too much and get careless.”

“I know that...”

Ann couldn’t perceive any concern whatsoever in Jonas’s expression as he said this.

Jonas had probably hardly ever left Knoxberry village. At most, he’d probably gone to Redington occasionally to buy things and attend festivals. Perhaps it couldn’t be helped that a person like him was ignorant about traveling.

But he’d just been attacked by bandits yesterday. She wished he would act a bit more concerned.

Shall had chased away the bandits yesterday incredibly easily. Perhaps that was why such a carefree thought like ‘If there’s a warrior fairy, we’ve got nothing to worry about!’ had taken root in Jonas’s mind.

After they finished scooping the water, they ate lunch and then departed once again.

According to plan, they arrived safely at the rest stop that Ann had chosen as

the place they'd spend the 3rd night of the journey.

For dinner that evening, Ann invited Jonas to eat with them.

As always, she built a small campfire.

Spreading out leather mats beside the fire, Ann called out to Shall, Jonas and Kathy.

Mythrill showed up by himself, even though she hadn't called for him. Then, as if observing, he walked slowly in a circle around them.

"I'll make introductions for Jonas and Kathy. This is Shall Fenn Shall. He's a warrior fairy. I bought him in Redington in order to have him be my guard. I've been calling him Shall."

"What about his name? Haven't you give him one?"

"What I said just now *is* his name."

At being introduced to a fairy, Jonas made a perplexed expression. Fairies were the same as tools. It was normal not to be introduced to them. Furthermore, it seemed he was completely unable to comprehend the concept of a master not naming their fairy.

Kathy was looking at Shall curiously, but he had his gaze averted, as if he didn't even see her.

Jonas gazed at Shall fixedly once again.

“You're so pretty that it's a shame to make you a warrior fairy, eh? You look like you'd sell well as a pet fairy.”

At this, Shall answered icily, “If you like me so much, why don't you buy me from this Scarecrow? In terms of idiocy you're evenly matched, so it doesn't make any difference to me which of you I'm used by.”

“Shall!”

Ann got flustered and tried to shut him up, but there was no taking back the words that had already flown out of his mouth.

“I-idiocy...?”

There was no way he'd ever had an experience like being called an idiot by a fairy before. Jonas was more astounded than he was angry.

Ann felt as if she herself had said something bad, and began to explain.

“I'm sorry, Jonas! Shall has a foul mouth, which seems to be why he couldn't be sold as a pet fairy. Even as a warrior fairy, because of his foul mouth he

was sold off at a low price. ‘Block-head,’ ‘Idiot,’ and so on, I’m also being called all of these things, so don’t take it to heart! You too, Shall, don’t say such things to people other than me. Other people don’t have an immunity to it!”

“Yeah. Well... You didn’t do anything wrong, Ann, so don’t worry about it. More importantly, what about that fairy over there?”

Regaining his wits, Jonas turned his gaze to Mythrill.

As his turn came up, Mythrill entered the center of the circle without hesitation.

“Me? My name is Mythrill Reed Pod-sama!! Don’t forget to put ‘sama’ on the end!”[1]

“P-put ‘sama’ on the end?!”

As if saying that he didn’t understand what what was being said to him, Jonas blinked his eyes several times in confusion.

“Shall and Mythrill Reed Pod, the two of you----!! Why do you have to act like that?! Say, Mythrill Reed Pod, how do you think people are going to feel, being told ‘put ‘sama’ on the end of my name’? Obviously they are not going to be happy to hear that!”

At Ann’s chiding words, Mythrill hung his head, disheartened. Then he

staggered off towards Ann's wagon.

Jonas neglected to introduce Kathy, as if it were only natural not to.

For dinner, Ann had water. Additionally, she layered dried meat between thinly cut slices of black bread to make sandwiches. She gave some to Shall as well.

Glancing over at Mythrill, Ann saw him sitting on top of the roof of the wagon with his knees purposefully[2] drawn up to his chest, doodling absently with the tip of his finger.

Mythrill was extremely noisy, so since the night before she'd been thinking of him as a bother.

However, if she thought carefully, his willingness to 'repay the favor' was admirable. He was probably just putting up a front by coming out with a strange monologue like that because the person he was trying to repay a favor to was one of those hated humans.

*---- When he's not talking, he's really cute. His eyes are so big and round.*

Ann divided her own sandwich in half, then beckoned to Mythrill.

"Come here, Mythrill. This is for you."

With a joyful expression appearing suddenly on his face, Mythrill bounced towards Ann and snatched the sandwich from her hand.

Then, with a serious expression, he said simply, “My name is Mythrill Reed Pod. Don’t shorten it.”

“That’s right. Sorry, Mythrill Reed Pod.”

Ann went to ration out a portion for Jonas as well, but he said that he had his own food, and brought it out from his wagon.

Jonas’s food was unthinkable extravagant by Ann’s standards.

Grape wine. Apple juice. Pear jam sandwiched between slices of white bread. A slice of pie stuffed with meat. His mother had put her whole heart into packing a tremendous amount of food and had him take it with him. It was like some little master’s picnic.

Seeing this, Ann didn’t have a hard time believing that Jonas’s parents had consented to his going on a journey.

Preparing such a detailed spread of food like this was an art that probably only the lady of the house would be capable of. There was no doubt that he’d been given the wagon and food supplies, and even the money to hire a guard, by his parents, who’d prepared everything for him before he left.

But why did the Anders family support their son's reckless behavior? Ann didn't understand it at all.

"If you had such a feast prepared for you, I guess you really didn't need my soup after all," Ann muttered without thinking.

At this Kathy, who was pouring wine into Jonas's cup said with a mocking laugh, "Of course not."

Jonas glared at Kathy.

"Shut up, Kathy. I won't allow you to speak to Ann so disrespectfully."

Kathy's face suddenly went pale. As if trying to smooth things over, she said hesitantly, "Ah, I'm sorry, Jonas-sama. I was just..."

"Disappear."

Kathy hung her head in shame. Starting from the tips of her toes and spreading upwards, her body lost color and then turned transparent. Before long, her entire body had disappeared.

It appeared as if the wine bottle that she was holding braced against her body was simply floating in mid-air.

Fairies each had their own special abilities. It seemed Kathy's special ability

was the ability to disappear.

Jonas said apologetically, “Sorry, Ann, it appears that my labor fairy hasn’t been taught to mind her manners properly. Your soup was delicious, really. It made me very happy.”

Perhaps Jonas’s behavior was only natural as a master. However, Ann felt bad for Kathy. Just before disappearing, Kathy’s expression had been very sad.

---

The next morning, the two wagons set out once again.

Mythrill sat happily in between Shall and Ann. He was in a good mood, and chattering non-stop.

“Ann, if there’s something I can do to repay the favor, tell me without holding back. But don’t make up some odd jobs, or something. Let me repay the favor in a more outstanding way.”

“An outstanding favor... I’ll try to think of something, but while we’re at it, perhaps a favor that utilizes your special abilities is best, Mythrill Reed Pod. What kind of abilities do you have?”

At her question, Mythrill puffed out his chest as if he’d been waiting for her to ask.



“My abilities, eh? Don’t be shocked! Listen carefully---- You see, I am the great lake in the northernmost part of the kingdom of Highland, Lake Loess! ...That is, a drop of its water, clinging to a leaf. I was born from that drop of water.”

“You were born from a drop of water? Are all fairies born from drops of water?”

Ann tilted her head to the side. At this, Mythrill waved his pointer finger at her chiddingly.

“Ann, you really don’t know anything, do you? Fairies are born from all kinds of things. Blades of grass, pinecones, drops of water and morning dew, rocks and gems... Something’s energy condenses and forms a fairy. However, for the energy to condense, a living creature’s gaze is required. A human or a fairy or an animal or a bird. Even a fish or a bug is fine. The energy will take form by being gazed at and become a fairy. A fairy’s lifespan is about as long as that of the item that became the source of their birth.”

“So, if Mythrill Reed Pod was born from a drop of water, what were you born from, Shall?”

At this question, Shall merely glanced towards her and didn’t respond.

Instead, Mythrill answered.

“You can tell just by looking, this guy’s an obsidian. Noble gem fairies [3] have the ability to create sharp items. Because I was born from a drop of water,

I have the ability to control water. That’s my ability.”

“Control water?! That’s amazing! Let me see.”

“Okay!”

Mythrill held out both hands in front of his chest.

He stared fixedly at his tiny palms, and water began to well up in the hollow between them.

Mythrill rolled that water into a ball, just as if he were kneading dough, then tossed it lightly into the air. It connected with the back of Ann’s hand with a splash, and burst open. It was just a bit, but Ann felt the coldness of the water.

“Incredible! Since you can control water, if there’s a flash flood you can alter the course of the water, right?! ”

“Don’t say such scary things! As if I could do something like that.”

“Then what can you do?”

“I just showed you, didn’t I?”

“Eh... That’s it?”

“That’s right... What, do you have a problem with that?”

Depressed, Ann’s shoulders slumped. It seemed that Mythrill’s ability was no big deal after all.

At this, Shall said with heavy sarcasm, “That will come in handy if you want to give water to a little birdy.”

“Sh-sh-sh-shut up!! What do you mean by that comment?! Are you trying to make fun of me?! I won’t forgive your attitude! I’ll say this in advance, but Shall Fenn Shall, you should improve your attitude towards Ann, too. It’s too rude!”

“You’re the rude one,” Shall responded coldly.

“What part of me is rude?!”

“The whole thing.”

“What did you say?!”

Glancing sideways at the the two quarreling fairies, Ann declared, “There’s no need to fight. You’re both equally rude.”

Ann earned a favorable amount of distance.

If they were able to arrive that night at the rest stop than Ann had chosen as they place they'd sleep on the 4th day of the trip, they'd have progressed a total of 400 caron along the bloody highway. That was 1/3rd of the bloody highway's total length of 1200 caron.

The sun was slowly and steadily beginning to descend, dyeing the tips of the mountains with shimmering orange light.

They'd probably be able to reach the rest stop without any problems tonight as well. Just as Ann was thinking this...

Harsh, slanting rays of light were slashing towards the wagon, as if pushing it forward, but suddenly they were blotted out.

Shall looked up at the sky, and knit his brows. Mythrill, too, looked up at the sky, as if drawn by an invisible thread, and then he went pale.

“Hey, Shall Fenn Shall, those are...”

Because Mythrill was suddenly speaking in a gravely serious voice, Ann tilted her head.

“What? What is it?”

At the same time, Jonas's wagon, which had been following behind Ann's, picked up speed and his driver's seat drew up even with hers.

"Hey, Ann. Ann! Look up!"

From Jonas's frightened expression, Ann finally realized that something was wrong.

She looked up at the sky where Jonas pointed.

Ann was startled. The sky was pitch black.

Since the light of the sun had been blocked out since earlier, she'd figured that clouds had come out.

However, the things blocking out the light of the sun were not clouds.

It was a flock of wild crows, as many as several hundred. The giant, black birds had formed a flock and without letting out a single cry were flying as if chasing after them.

"This is... An attack..."

Ann had heard rumors of something like this. Wild crows were the clean-up crew of the wilderness, foraging for carrion. However, it was said that in the event that they couldn't find any dead animals to feed on, wild crows would

form flocks to attack, kill, and devour living creatures.

It was said that if you were attacked by one of these flocks, there was no hope for you.

The crows would begin by targeting their prey's eyeballs with their sharp beaks. They'd inhibit their prey's movements, and then begin to feast on their flesh. Even if they hid inside the wagon, it was no use. The crows were intelligent. They would patiently peck at the roof shingles until they'd opened a hole and then go rushing in.

Ann shuddered, looking up at the flock of black birds covering the sky.

If they were attacked by a flock of this size, there was no hope for them. They couldn't handle such numbers.

Ann looked at Shall. This time for sure, she would have to order him. Her life was also on the line. 'If you don't want your wing to be destroyed, save us from the wild crows.' Now was the time for her to order him like that. However...

"Shall, please..."

Against her better judgement, she began to speak. But, at the word 'please,' Shall's eyes lit up fleetingly. Ann felt him wordlessly rebuffing her, 'Are you trying to play at being friends again?'

Understanding his unspoken message, Ann resolved herself.

“Shall, this is an order. Protect us from the wild crows. I’m holding your wing. You know what that means, right?” Ann ordered. But she couldn’t wipe away a feeling of uneasiness.

She was thinking that she didn’t want to do something horrible like pretending she would destroy Shall’s wing. But if those thoughts were seen through by Shall, he probably wouldn’t obey her order.

Just as she thought, Shall’s eyes narrowed as if he found something amusing.

If he told her ‘No,’ Ann didn’t know what she would do. She might have no choice but to take his wing out from where it was concealed at her breast and act as if she intended to tear it.

But Shall nodded. Then...

“Stop the wagon.”

Leaving her with only this instruction, he jumped down from the driver’s seat. Ann frantically stopped the horses and looked back to where Shall had gotten off. Making the sword made of condensed light appear in his hand, he called nonchalantly back over his shoulder, “Hide in the wagon.”

---- *He’s going to obey me? Why?*

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The wild crows, seeing that they'd stopped, began to descend towards at them.

“Ann!”

Jonas had also stopped his wagon, and was looking up at the sky with a face white with fear.

“Jonas, you get inside the wagon too! Hurry!”

At this, Jonas nearly tripped over himself fleeing into the wagon.

“That’s it! This is how I’ll repay the favor! I’ll also chase off those birds.”

Mythrill abruptly snapped his fingers and stood up, rolling up his sleeves with sudden enthusiasm.

Ann paled.

“No, no, no! It’s impossible, you’ll die. Come on!”

“What do you mean, ‘Impossible’?! Don’t be so ungracious towards my repayment of the favor... Whoa!!”

Snatching up a grumbling Mythrill by the collar, Ann jumped down from the driver’s seat and flew into the back of the wagon.



“Don’t go out there. If you die repaying the favor, there will be no meaning to my having saved you in the first place.”

Sitting on the floor of the wagon, Ann hugged Mythrill tightly to her.

“...I... I’m going to... repay... the favor...!”

While being embraced, Mythrill’s voice dwindled out, and his cheeks grew steadily redder. Finally, he fell silent.

Ann tilted her head, listening to the noises outside.

The crows, who until now had been silent, began to caw loudly all at once, as if letting out a battle cry.

Assailed by the sensation that that cry was suddenly coming crashing down upon her head, Ann unconsciously covered her ears with both hands. The noise and vibration of the wild crows’ bodies incessantly hitting the wagon assaulted her senses.

It took all her strength to keep from screaming.

*---- Help me... Shall!*

The wagon rocked as the horses shied in apparent terror.

The wild crows' cries rained down all around them as if to engulf the wagon whole.

Ann couldn't suppress the shaking of her body. She drew her knees up to her chest protectively and stayed as still as possible.

At this, Mythrill's tiny hand gently touched Ann's cheek.

"Don't be afraid, Ann. It's okay. Shall Fenn Shall is an obsidian. He's different from us. He won't get hurt, and he won't break. Even among fairies, he's exceptionally strong."

After a considerable amount of time had passed, at last Ann got the feeling that the number of impacts from crows crashing into the wagon had lessened. The ear-splitting cries of the crows lessened as well, until bit by bit, all became quiet outside the wagon.

Complete silence had returned. Ann and Mythrill looked at each other.

"I wonder if it's over?"

"Yeah... I don't know..."

Ann raised her head, set Mythrill on the floor, and stood up. Fearfully, fearfully, she opened the door.

Just at that moment, something black dropped to the ground with a thud, right before her eyes.

“Wah!!”

Ann lept back, falling on her rear.

What had slid down off the roof of the wagon and landed on the steps was the dead body of a wild crow. After confirming this, Ann returned her eyes to the scene before her.

What she saw on the other side of the open door was a highway paved pitch black.

The highway was covered with the dead bodies of crows, appearing as if it had been spread with black feathers.

Shall stood still on top of that pitch black carpet, his white cheeks splattered with blood.

“...Shall.”

At her call, he turned his gaze towards Ann.

His eyes were sharp, as if simultaneously repulsed and spellbound by the scene around him. At this moment he truly appear to be a sword chiselled out

of polished obsidian.

Swinging the sword in his hand, Shall let it dissipate, then wiped nonchalantly at the blood on his cheek. Then he slowly made his way across the black carpet towards Ann.

At the sight of Ann collapsed in a pile, Shall laughed brusquely, as if making fun of her.

“Did your legs give out on you?”

“N-no!!”

Ann tried to stand up and refute him firmly, but her legs couldn’t hold her, and she staggered.

Just when it appeared that Ann was in danger of tumbling out of the wagon, Shall caught her in his arms.

At just that moment, Shall’s wing, fluttering in the wind, brushed across Ann’s cheek. At that sensation, smoother than the most luxurious silk, something sweet ran up her back with a jolt.

When Ann looked up, black eyes were looking down at her. Unthinkingly, she gazed back in fascination.

That blackness threatened to suck her in. *How beautiful...* she thought once again. The eyes gazing at her were so lustrous, it seemed as if her entire body would melt.

“What is it, Scarecrow. Do you want a ‘*bonus*’?”



Having the mocking question whispered to her in such a sweet voice, Ann suddenly became angry.

“Who would?!”

She frantically removed herself from Shall’s grip, then turned her back on him.

“A-anyways, thanks for saving us.”

She hoped he didn’t realize that her cheeks were bright red.

---

“What an incredible number. We really shouldn’t have had any chance, being attacked by this many.”

Holding up the hem of her dress and wading through the dead bodies of the wild crows, Ann made her way to the driver’s seat of the wagon.

Jonas climbed out of his wagon as well, and came up next next to Ann.

“You really saved us, Ann. Good thing you’re using Shall.”

Being told this, Ann glanced over her shoulder at Shall with a troubled look on her face.

“Eh... Y-yeah, I guess.”

Watching Ann from behind as she began walking again, Shall laughed bitterly.

Ann had ordered Shall with all her might, in order to try and use him.

However, her order held none of the cruelty of a master. Even if she threatened to destroy his wing, Shall was well aware that she could never follow through with it.

However, Shall had protected them. It wasn't that he'd obeyed because he'd been ordered to do so. If Ann had been pecked to death by wild crows, Shall's wing that she carried would also have been in danger.

That was the only reason he'd protected her.

Ann was aware of the weakness of her own orders, and of the fact that Shall had seen through it. She had an inkling that Shall wasn't acting because of her orders.

Her perception about those types of things seemed to be good.

*---- You're holding my wing in your hands.[4] Keep your wits about you, Scarecrow.*

Rather than a master, Ann was more like luggage. Since she was clutching his wing to her and wouldn't let go, he certainly couldn't treat her roughly. He couldn't let her leave his side.



From Shall's perspective, it was as if he had a living jewelry box following him around, one which he'd lost the key to and couldn't open.

Why was a helpless girl like this travelling around all by herself? It was a mystery.

---

After calming the frightened horses down, Ann took them by the bit and slowly lead them across the ground strewn the the dead bodies of wild crows. There were a terrifying number of corpses. Even though their lives would have been in danger if they hadn't done this, getting a first-hand experience of just how many lives that had been lost as they crunched beneath her feet made her spirits sink.

*---- Among these wild crows, there might have been some that left behind chicks in their nests...*

But, she would need to find a way to compromise her feelings with acts like this in the future, should they be necessary to survive.

That was unavoidable, because Emma, who'd always covered Ann's eyes and protected her from unpleasant and scary things, was no longer here.

After a while, the horses regained their composure and the wagon returned to traveling as usual.

At last, Ann was able to sit back and rest on the driver's seat.

However, she looked up at the sky and knit her brows.

“This isn't good.”

The sun was half hidden in the shadow of the mountains. The sky in the east was already growing a shade of dark indigo blue.

Because of the wild crows' attack, they'd lost too much time.

The way things stood now, it would be very difficult to reach the rest stop before the sun set.

“It looks like we've leapt out of the frying pan and into the fire.”[5]

“What will you do? Are you going to wait out the night sleeping in the back of the wagon?”

It seemed that Shall had caught on to the danger immediately. He said this from where he sat beside her on the driver's seat.

“If we did that, I'd have to ask you to stay up all night keeping watch, Shall. You just chased the wild crows away for us, I couldn't put such a burden on you...”

“Leave it to me! I’ll stay up all night and keep watch! This time, for sure, is my chance to shine!”

Seated between Ann and Shall, Mythrill waved his hand enthusiastically, as if waiting to be called on.

Ann smiled wryly.

“If there’s no other way, I’ll ask you. But wait a minute.”

Pulling the map out from under the driver’s seat, Ann traced the highway’s path on the map with her finger.

The rest stop she’d plan to spend the 4th night of the journey at was still far ahead.

However, before the rest stop... Just a bit further than where they were now, there was a different marking than the one for ‘rest stop.’

It was a ‘doctor’s inn.’

Jonas pulled his wagon up beside Ann’s, and looked up at the sky anxiously as well.

“Ann, it’s going to be dark soon. We might not have any choice but to run the rest of the way to the rest stop.”

“As soon as it gets dark, wild beasts come out. It’s dangerous to travel after night falls. We have to get to a safe place before then. If we travel a bit further, there’s a doctor’s inn. Let’s take shelter there. If it turns out that this doctor’s inn is closed, then it can’t be helped. We can either run the rest of the way to the rest stop or we can stop the wagons on the side of the road and spend the night in the back.”

As she spoke, Ann quickly put away the map. Jonas tilted his head.

“What is a ‘doctor’s inn’?”

“Like the name says, it’s the home of a doctor. Doctors working in remote places often run an inn in their home where they let travelers spend the night. Bandits also depend on doctors, right? So, doctors’ homes are safe because bandits will rarely do anything against them. However, if the doctor dies or moves away, the inn will close. It’s best not to rely too much on doctors’ inns while traveling, but... We’ll just have to pray that it’s still there. Anyways, let’s hurry!”

Ann applied the whip to the horses. Jonas set his face in a serious expression, and drove his wagon forward as well.

The sun sank mercilessly lower and lower as they watched.

At the darkness that spread across the sky from the east, Ann felt a sense of terror.

She applied the whip to the horses again, urging them even faster. However, Ann's horses were old. She didn't want to handle them roughly.

If it were Emma, she would have been able to read the horses' level of exhaustion based on their breathing, and gotten them to run right at their maximum speed. Ann wasn't that skillful yet.

As the darkness drew closer, her agitation increased.

"Just a bit faster... I guess it's impossible? But, what should I do... If it were mama, she'd be able to do this right..." Ann muttered, gazing straight ahead.

Shall glanced over at Ann.

"What about your mother? Where is she?"

The question caused a jolt of pain to shoot through her chest. In order to suppress that, Ann forced a smile. Then she said with fabricated cheerfulness, "Mama died. I guess I forget to mention that."

She saw a hint of surprise on Shall's normally expressionless face.

"My mother, who was a silver sugar master, died half a month ago. Because mama and I were always traveling all throughout the kingdom, I have no home to return to. I also don't have any relatives except for mama. After mama died and I was thinking about how I should live from now on, I decided

to become a silver sugar master. I intend to enter my sugar sculpture in the sugar sculpture festival that's held in Lewiston at the end of fall, and become a silver sugar master. I want to become a silver sugar master this year. Do you know why?"

Shall shrugged his shoulders. Of course he didn't know.

Ann continued on. In order to avoid thinking of anything unnecessary, she fixed her eyes on the approaching darkness. She did her best to think only of hurrying forward as she moved her lips.

"Soul Ascension Day[6] is in the winter, right? It's a day of celebration to send off the souls of those who passed away the previous year. During that festival, I will create a magnificent sugar sculpture with my own hands as a silver sugar master, and send mama's soul to heaven. With my own hands, I'll make the best sugar sculpture in the entire kingdom. Don't you think that mama will be able to go heaven without any worries when she sees it? It's a good idea, right?"

Ann rambled on and on, speaking in a cheerful tone of voice. She had the feeling that there was something in her chest that threatened to come overflowing out if she didn't seal it up like this.

The reason why she wanted to make it in time for this year's sugar sculpture festival.

The reason why she wanted to become a silver sugar master this year.

It was all because she wanted to send her mother off to heaven by making the world's best sugar sculpture with her own hands, which had been recognized as the most skillful in the whole kingdom.

That was the only reason.

She was well aware that it was a sentimental reason.

But she was desperate. Right now, that was Ann's only desire.

Something right before her eyes. Something she could do for Emma. If she didn't have that to cling onto and continue chasing after, Ann felt that the ground would fall out from under her feet and she would fall into a bottomless darkness.

Shall gazed at Ann as if searching for something. She'd been told that he was born from an obsidian. Indeed, those eyes were as beautiful and as deep as an obsidian.

Ann felt that under that gaze her heart would be laid bare, and so she couldn't meet Shall's eyes.

“Since you're born from an object, that means fairies are born alone, right? That might also be nice...”

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Without warning, a tiny fissure opened up in Ann's heart.

For a moment, the frantic need to hurry receded into the distance.

The only noise seemed to be that of the wind rattling around inside her empty chest.

“If you have a mother, it's hard once she's gone. It feels as if you've lost your heart. If you never had her in the first place, you could get by without experiencing this kind of pain,” Ann muttered as if speaking to herself.

At this, Shall answered quietly, “Even if we're born alone, it doesn't mean that we'll never have to part with anyone. It's not as if fairies don't also know the pain of losing someone.”

After saying just that, Shall fell silent.

Inside of Shall, there was a feeling similar to the one in Ann's heart. His silence confirmed it.

However, that silence was unbearable.

Ann felt that if she said anything more, the emotion that she was holding back inside of herself would overflow.

That emotion that Ann was desperately holding back was unfathomable



loneliness. There was certainly loneliness inside of Shall as well. It seemed that if those lonelinesses were ever to touch one another, they would overflow as one, and no one would be able to hold them back.

Ann continued staring straight forward.

---

*---- So that's why. Her mother is gone.*

Gazing at Ann's face in profile as she stared obstinately straight ahead, Shall began to understand.

He was also able to understand that Ann was unconsciously searching for someone to ease her loneliness.

She was lonely. This scrawny, 15 year old girl was all alone. She was so terribly helpless. How terrible her sense of solitude must be.

An oppressive feeling of solitude, as if the darkness would permeate into one's body. Shall also knew that feeling very well.

Perhaps Ann even believed that if she entered the sugar sculpture festival and was able to become a silver sugar master, that loneliness would disappear.

Either that, or she believed that if she didn't dangle a target just out of reach to chase after like this, she would fall apart.

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Likely, it was the latter.

*---- If that's the case, then let her chase after it.*

What he was recalling at that moment was the pain of having his wing torn off. That, and the events that followed it.

The separation that was more painful than losing his wing.

*----Liz...*

At that time, to keep himself going, Shall had also continued running after things that were just out of reach.

As long as he was doing that, he was able to get by without having to think about anything.

That period was not a happy one for him, but neither was it unhappy.

If the alternative was to fall apart, he wanted to let her chase after something. Even if the other person was a human, that's how he felt as someone who'd experienced the same feelings.

Mythrill was silent and gazed at Ann with a worried expression.

Just then... Ann's stern expression suddenly grew cheerful.

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“Ah! Look, lights!”

Off to the right side of the highway up ahead, where the entire sky was now almost completely stained a deep indigo blue, a snug little house surrounded by tall stone walls appeared, nestled in the shadow of the mountains. It was the doctor’s inn.

There was only a single opening in the stone walls, which were constructed using rocks of uneven size and shape. That was the gate. The gate was equipped with massive wooden double doors.

Inside the gate, they could see a stone building with a wood-shingled roof. Warmly colored light was leaking out from the windows.

The massive gate doors affixed to the stone wall were just now beginning to close.

“Wait!” Ann shouted.

// Chapter 3, END

**Notes:**

[1] 様づけ - As many of you probably know, ‘sama’ is an honorific added to the end of a person’s name to show respect. It is a level above ‘san’ and generally used only when speaking to business clients and people of a much

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higher social rank than you. Mythrill demanding that Jonas add ‘sama’ to the end of his name is preposterous because in the kingdom of Highland fairies are considered an inferior species to humans. Picture your dog demanding that you call him ‘Sir Spot.’

[2] わざとらしく - Mythrill knows Ann is looking at him and is playing up the ‘my feelings are hurt’ act on purpose.

[3] 貴石 - This is not a real word in Japanese, as far as I can tell. It’s made up from the characters for “noble” and “stone.” I believe it refers to precious gems like obsidian, ruby, diamond, etc.

[4] 抱いている - This was hard to translate because in Japanese this word means ‘to hold’ but with the connotation of ‘embracing.’ I also wanted to reference a phrase I often hear used in English, ‘to hold someone’s heart in the palm of your hands,’ since fairies wings are often described in this series as being equivalent to their hearts.

[5] 一難去って、また一難 - Literally, this just translates as “Escape from one problem and find yourself faced with another.” However, I chose to substitute an English idiom with the same meaning.

[6] 昇魂日 - In katakana, this is written as “pull soul day,” which was how it was written in the English scanlation of the manga. I believe that this was the author’s attempt to create the name of a holiday using English translations of the meanings of the individual kanji, but she didn’t quite get it right. 昇 means ‘to ascend, to go up’ in the sense of something being *pulled* up by an outside force. To make it sound less awkward in English, I chose to translate the name of this holiday as “Soul Ascension Day.”



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# Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 1

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Black Fairy”*

Story by Mikawa Miri

Illustrations by Aki

Scans: Mizuouji

Translation: Icarus Bride

Proofread: Icarus Bride & Mizuouji

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## **Chapter 4. The Night at the Doctor's Inn.**

The person closing the gate was a middle aged man. He was tall and thin, with a scraggly beard and disheveled hair streaked with gray. However Ann could sense intelligence in his features.

“Wait, please wait! Please!”

Noticing Ann and Jonas's wagons coming towards him, the man waited for them with the gate half-open.

After pulling up in front of the gate, Ann stopped the wagon and got down from the driver's seat.

She was in a hurry, but she didn't forget to bow her head politely.

“I'm sorry to show up like this, after it's already gotten so dark. Are you the doctor who lives here?”

In response to her question, the man nodded.

“We are travelers who were planning to stay at the rest stop a bit further ahead tonight. However we were attacked by wild crows and

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lost time. There's no way we'll be able to make it to the rest area. Please, let us stay here tonight."

Even if it were called a doctor's inn, in the end it was still the doctor's personal home. If the doctor said no, travellers couldn't stay there.

Ann did her best to act properly and get the doctor to understand their plight.

The doctor turned his eyes to Ann's carriage, examining it in the dim light.

"Indeed, I can see that you were attacked by wild crows. There are marks on the outside walls of your wagon from being pecked repeatedly. You were lucky to get away."

"It was because of him. He's a warrior fairy."

Ann looked back at Shall, who sat on the driver's seat of her wagon. The doctor followed her gaze, turning towards Shall, and then said dreamily, "What a beautiful fairy. You don't usually get to see fairies like this. He's a warrior fairy? Not a pet fairy?"

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The doctor hobbled over to the driver's seat and looked up at Shall. He didn't move for a moment, staring at Shall in a daze, as if enchanted by him.

The area had become completely dark by now, and the far off howls of wolves could be heard.

Ann was growing impatient, but she did her best to bear it. However...

“Haven't you ever seen a fairy before, Scruffy?” Shall said in a fed-up sounding voice.

Ann paled, and almost let out a shriek.

*---- Hyaaagh----!! Sha--ll----!!! What are you saying----?!!*

Ann suddenly broke out in a cold sweat.

Indeed, this doctor's hair and beard were both as scruffy as could be. Honestly, he *was* scruffy-looking.

However, if they upset him, it wouldn't turn out well for them.

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As if awakening from a dream, the doctor blinked several times. Then he laughed as if ashamed of himself, and turned back to Ann.

“No, I’m sorry, that was rude of me. Living in a place like this, it’s rare to see beautiful things, you see. Regardless, it seems you’ve had a hard time, eh? Come, spend the night here. The rate is 60 vine per person. If that’s fine with you, then you can bring the two wagons and your horses inside the walls.”

“Th-thank you very much!”

Ann wiped away the cold sweat, and bowed her head low in relief.

When they drove the wagons inside walls, they saw that another guest’s wagon had already been brought inside.

It was clear at first glance that the paint on the wagon of the guest who’d arrived before them was of the highest quality. It was a bit old, but the construction was elegant.

Jonas, who’d pulled his wagon up next to that one, came up to Ann and said in a small voice, “Look, Ann. This is a high-class carriage.

I wonder if the guest who's here already is someone of high social status? If so, I'll be nervous."

"We might have to be on our best behavior. Especially Shall. I'd like to get him to hold his tongue, but..."

While heading toward the door to the house, Ann looked up at Shall, who walked beside her, with a severe expression on her face.

"Shall, I thought my heart was going to stop earlier. I can't believe you called the doctor Scruffy."

At this, Mythrill, who hopped along behind Ann, raised his voice in censure.

"That's right, that's right! Rather than 'Scruffy' you should have called him 'Tottering'!"

"That's right, not 'Scruffy' but 'Tottering'... ----Wait a minute, that's not right----!"

Ann yelled at the two fairies, "Both 'Scruffy' and 'Tottering' are not okay! What will we do if you make him mad? We'll get kicked out!"

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At this, Shall said calmly, “He’s not the type of human to get mad about something like that. You can tell just by looking at him. I harassed all sorts of humans during my time in the fairy market, so I have confidence in my instincts.”

“We don’t need your strange ‘instincts’! In any case, *please*, stop harassing people.”

“It’s been my habit for many years, so I don’t have confidence in my ability to stop now.”

At his point-blank response, Ann’s shoulders slumped in resignation. It seemed that if Shall said something and made someone mad, Ann would have no choice but to bow her head and apologize with all her might.

Opening the door, they stepped into the house.

When they passed through the door, they entered into a large, unpartitioned room.

A medicine cabinet and a wooden examination table were set along one wall. Three mismatched tables of varying design and made out

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of different materials were placed along the other wall. It seemed that this room was functioning both as an examination room and a dining room.

There was no sign of the guest who'd arrived before them. Perhaps they were resting in the room that had been assigned to them.

The doctor led Ann's group to a door on the far wall.

On the other side of the wall was a hallway running perpendicular to the door. At one end of the hallway was a room that appeared to be the kitchen. At the other end of the hallway was a room that appeared to be the bathroom.

There were three doors lined up on each side of the hallway, which seemed to be guest rooms.

Ann and Jonas were assigned one room each.

There were two beds in the room assigned to Ann. A clean curtain was hung on the small window. The room was simple but comfortable-looking.

“After you’ve put away your luggage and rested for a bit, come to the dining room. If you’re okay with a simple soup, I can serve you some.”

The doctor returned to the dining room after saying this.

In the first place, they didn’t have enough luggage between them to require much time unpacking. More importantly, Ann stomach was making gurgling noises. Jonas seemed to be the same, because he came to Ann’s room to complain that he was hungry.

Before long, they were hesitantly poking their faces into the dining room.

In the dining room, the doctor had placed a large pot on one of the tables and was ladling soup into ceramic bowls.

There were two young men sitting at a separate table from the one where the doctor was preparing the soup.

Jonas whispered to Ann, “Those must be the guests who arrived before us. They’re not dressed all that fancy, but...”

The two young men were facing each other, playing a game of cards.

One of them was a tall, solidly built young man. He had unruly brown hair that was sticking up in all directions. The shirt, pants and jacket that he wore were not gaudy, but appeared to be well-made.

However, there was something wild glinting fleetingly in his brown eyes that no amount of fine tailoring could conceal.

The other person was an exotic looking young man. He had a lean, muscular frame and brown skin. His hair was pure white, and he had grey eyes. Something about him called to mind a large, sinuous feline. He was probably from one of the kingdoms on the continent. He wore leather pants and a leather vest, and there was a gently curved sword at his side.

A person of high social status travelling in disguise, and his bodyguard. Ann guessed that it must be something like that.

The doctor noticed Ann's group and called out, "Oh, there you are. Come, the soup is ready."

At the sound of his voice, the two young men turned their gazes towards the door from behind which Ann's face was peeking out.

“Sit here. I'm not sure about the taste, but there's plenty to go around. Eat as much as you like.”

“Thank you very much,” Ann replied politely, and they all entered the dining room.

Ann and Jonas sat at the table where the doctor had placed the large pot. That's when Ann noticed that Shall and Mythrill, and Kathy as well, were moving away from the table.

Ann called out to them, “What is it, you three? If you don't hurry up and sit down...”

At this, the doctor and the two young men who'd arrived before them looked at Ann in surprise.

“Eh? What...?”

To Ann, who faltered under the weight of those gazes, Jonas whispered, “Ann, people don't usually eat with their fairies, right?”

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“I do.”

“Normal people don’t! Even if this is a doctor’s inn, it’s still an inn, right? If you say things like that in public, people will think you have no common sense.”

Hearing these words, Ann realized that she had done something that deviated from the so-called ‘common sense.’

However, at the same time, she felt herself getting angry. What was so fun about putting fairies down like this?

“I don’t need to know ‘common sense’ like that. I won’t know it. Therefore, I want to eat with Shall and them.”

Ann looked at the doctor.

“We’ve been eating together while traveling. I want to eat with them. If that’s not allowed, then I won’t eat either.”

“I see... Personally, I’m not the type to care about things like that, but you see... Right now there are other guests here too....”



Suddenly a loud laugh rang out, seeming to erase the doctor's mumbled words.

“Don't worry about it!! It doesn't bother me either!”

The person who spoke was one of the guests who'd arrived earlier, the brown haired young man. While laughing, he waved to Ann with one of his large hands.

“Say, Miss. What's your name?”

“It's Ann. Ann Halford.”

“I'm Hugh. You don't need to hold back on our account, Ann. Call your fairies to the table.”

“Thank you.”

His casual attitude and cheery smile eased the tense situation.

Ann beckoned to the fairies, who were unsure about what was going on, to come to her table.

As Ann's group began eating their soup, the man who'd called himself Hugh gathered up the cards he'd been playing into his hands. Then he turned towards Ann and began to speak to her from where he sat at the table beside hers.

“Where did you guys come from? Did you say where it was you were headed, and for what purpose you're crossing a dangerous highway like this?”

“He, Jonas, is from Knoxberry village. I've never stayed in one place ever since I was born, so I can't really say where I'm from. We're going to Lewiston.”

Then, puffing his chest out slightly, Jonas boasted, “We're planning to participate in the sugar sculpture festival that's being held in Lewiston. She and I are both sugar craftsmen.”

“Ohh! So you're sugar craftsmen, eh? But, you're pretty well-off for ordinary sugar craftsmen, aren't you? Traveling with two labor fairies and a pet fairy...”

Hugh stood up, grinning. He moved to Shall's side, and peered down at him fixedly.

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“Hmm~~ This looks like it was expensive. Whose pet fairy is he?”

Shall had his hands cupped around the bowl of soup and was eating quietly. For just a moment, he glanced over at Hugh with sharp eyes, but thankfully he said nothing.

“I bought Shall. But he’s not a pet fairy. He’s a warrior fairy. He’s my guard.”

“A warrior fairy? You lie. You don’t need to be embarrassed. It’s only natural for a girl your age[1] to want to travel around accompanied by a fairy that looks like this. Did you fall in love with him at first sight? Is that why you bought him?”

Ann knew that she was being made fun of. However her embarrassment made her suddenly angry.

“It’s not like that.”

“Don’t blush, don’t blush! I’m telling you, I understand how it is, so you don’t need to lie.”

“It’s not a lie!”

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Without thinking, her voice got louder. Hugh made an amused face and his eyes shined.

“Then shall we prove it?”

Hugh glanced over at the young man accompanying him. Then he stepped back one step.

The young man, who up until now had been so quiet it was if he'd erased his presence completely, reacted to Hugh's signal.

Suddenly the young man grabbed the sword at his side and unsheathed it in one smooth movement, knocking over the chair as he did so. He looked like a hunting dog, crouching down and setting out at a run. His sword flew towards Shall.

“Shall!”

Even before Ann let out a shriek, Shall was on his feet and leaping back.

Before the second swing of the sword came slashing towards him, a silvery-white sword was materializing in Shall's hand.

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Shall used his sword to repel the sword that was swung down at him with all of its wielder's might.

The swords clashed, and the impact pierced through the air in waves. “Not too bad,” the brown-skinned young man muttered expressionlessly.

The corners of Shall’s mouth lifted in a faint smile, as he whispered to his opponent, “Do you want to die?”

“Unfortunately, I’m not that rusty.”

The metallic noise of swords crashing together rang out. The two of them fought back and forth, neither backing down.

“I see... He is indeed a warrior fairy,” Hugh said with a note of surprise, then grinned.

“That’s enough, Salim. Lower your sword.”

As ordered, the young man who’d been called Salim promptly lowered his sword.

Shall shrugged, then loosened his stance and dismissed his sword as well.

“What on earth are you doing, you-- you huge idiot!! If there’s so much as a scratch on my companion, you won’t get away with this!!”

Having come to her senses, Ann stood up and without thinking grabbed the front of Hugh’s shirt.

“Sorry, sorry. Come on, don’t get so mad. I just couldn’t believe what a fine warrior fairy you’ve got. I wanted to try him out and see,” Hugh said, managing not to sound the least bit repentant.

“So, you thought it was a good idea to do something like this?!”

“No~~ Come on, that’s why I’m apologizing, see? To make up for it, I’ll pay you guys’ lodging fees.”

“Do you really think you can get out of this that easy---- Eh...Our lodging fees...? Really?”

Without realizing it, Ann loosened her grip on his shirtfront.

In the past half a year, they'd spent quite a bit on Emma's medical treatment. Furthermore, Ann wasn't certain how much money she'd be able to earn by herself. They'd already gone through most of their savings by living off of them for the past 6 months. And Ann had used what little was left to buy Shall.

If they paid the lodging fees here, Ann would be all but penniless. Hugh's proposal was extremely appealing.

"For one, two, three... five people, at 60 vine per person, it comes to... 3 cres, eh? That's quite a bit just for an apology gift..."

"What?! You're the one who offered in the first place, right?!"

"I guess you're right, but... Somehow I feel like you're getting the better end of the deal. Oh, that's right. You guys said you were sugar craftsmen, right? Each of you make me one sculpture. If you do that, I'll pay the lodging fees for the five of you."

"Huh?!"

“Just the size of your fist is fine. For sugar sculptures of that size, the most you’d get for two is 10 vine, right? You’ll end up earning 3 cres for the price of 10 vine. Not too bad, right?”

His manner of speaking gave Ann the feeling that she was being toyed with.

However, the prospect of not having to pay the lodging fees was appealing.

Ann turned to Jonas. Jonas nodded.

“I don’t have any objections, Ann.”

For some reason, Jonas seemed happy.

Ann turned back to Hugh, and though still a bit angry said, “Fine. We’ll make the sugar sculptures. In exchange, you definitely have to pay our lodging fees.”

“If you’d like, I’ll get down on one knee and swear it?”



“I don’t need an insincere-sounding vow like that. Anyways, just wait a bit. We’ll make them after we’ve finished eating.”

After they finished dinner, Ann went with Jonas out to the wagon to get the silver sugar. Inside the back of the wagon, barrels filled with silver sugar were lined up along one wall.

There were five barrels.

One was empty. Another was two-thirds of the way full of silver sugar. The remaining three were stuffed to the brim with silver sugar. Those participating in the sugar sculpture festival in Lewiston would each submit one sugar sculpture suitable for a celebration. At the same time, they were also required to submit three barrels of silver sugar.

The reason why was because it was not just their skill for crafting sugar sculptures that was being examined, but also their ability to secure high quality sugar apples and refine them into silver sugar.

Refining sugar apples into silver sugar had been Ann’s job since the time she was 10 years old.

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“We can’t use three of the barrels, but there should be enough left in the two-thirds full barrel. Even if we were to make 10 sculptures the size of my fist, there should be more than enough left to make the sugar sculpture for the festival,” Ann muttered while opening the lid to the barrel.

She filled a stone bowl with silver sugar and handed it to Jonas. Then she filled another bowl for herself, and exited the wagon.

Ann almost couldn’t believe her ears when Jonas said jovially as they walked towards the house, “What are you getting so worked up about?”

“I can’t shake the feeling that he’s making fun of us.”

“Even so, displaying your skills in front of others is something to be proud of, isn’t it?”

“I guess you’re right...”

“Of course I am. I have confidence in my abilities. I’ll tell you the truth, but you’ve got to keep it a secret. There’s a high probability that I will be recommended as the next leader of the Radcliffe guild.

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The current leader of the Radcliffe guild, who is a distant relative of mine, by the way, was looking at one of my sugar sculptures. It seems that he's taken an interest in me. Of course, to become the leader of the guild I'll first need to become a silver sugar master, but..."

There were three main guilds of sugar craftsmen.

The Mercury guild.

The Paige guild.

And the Radcliffe guild.

If a sugar craftsman was not part of one of these three guilds, they would face opposition and have difficulties obtaining sugar apples, the raw materials for making silver sugar, and selling off the sugar sculptures they made.

That was why most sugar craftsmen belonged to a guild.

Naturally, since the guilds were in competition with one another for various things, there were occasional feuds.

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Ann's mother Emma hadn't belonged to a guild. Saying that she wasn't fond of the guilds' way of doing things, she worked hard securing her own sugar apples and selling off her sugar sculptures.

Based on the way Jonas pridefully conveyed this news, Ann got a sense that his world view and values were complete different from her own.

However, their desire to become silver sugar masters was the same.

“So you want to become a silver sugar master, too? Why don't you participate in this year's sugar sculpture festival?”

“No, I... I participated last year, and the year before, and still haven't been able to become a silver sugar master. This year I'll just observe. I'll polish my skills a bit more, and participate again next year. But, in the long term, I definitely have to become a silver sugar master. If I don't, I won't be able to become the leader of the Radcliffe guild. I won't be able to become the Silver Sugar Viscount, either.”

At his mention of the Silver Sugar Viscount, Ann's eyes widened.

“Jonas, you want to become the Silver Sugar Viscount?”

The Silver Sugar Viscount... One person, among all of the silver sugar masters, who was chosen by the king to be the royal family's exclusive silver sugar master.

Although it was only for one generation, the silver sugar master who was chosen would be given the title[2] of viscount.

Each of the sugarcraft guilds had to obey the Silver Sugar Viscount's orders. Disobeying his orders would be seen as disobeying a royal decree.

Silver Sugar Viscount was the highest rank a sugar craftsmen could possibly achieve.

“Yes, I want to. That is to say, I definitely will become the Silver Sugar Viscount. After all, there's no more wonderful a dream than that of a commoner being able to become an aristocrat, right? So, Ann...”

Jonas suddenly stopped walking. Following his lead, Ann stopped as well.

“Won’t you marry me? I’m going to become a silver sugar master, and the Silver Sugar Viscount. I can promise you a happy life.”

The moon poked its face out between the clouds. Ann could see Jonas’s face clearly.

She should have been thrilled by these words. However, no matter how hard she tried to imagine a happy life with him, she couldn’t picture it.

Even looking into Jonas’s finely featured face and hearing him speak these words, her heart didn’t begin to race.

*----Rather than Jonas...*

The figure that suddenly rose into her thoughts was Shall’s. Ann herself was surprised that she’d recalled his face at a moment like this.

“I’m sorry, Jonas. Let’s leave this conversation at that for now.”

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As they hurried into the house, Hugh was sitting at the table waiting for them. Two chairs were lined up across from him.

Salim, the doctor and the fairies were gathered around like an audience.

“Alright, you two. Sit in the chairs. I want you to make the sugar sculptures in front of me.”

On the table there were two containers filled with water for each of them, one deep and one shallow. There were also two cutting boards that looked like they’d been borrowed from the kitchen.

Looking at the items laid out, Ann furrowed her brows and sat in the chair.

“There’s no need to add color. I’ll leave the shape of the sculptures up to you, as well.”

“Can I ask a question first?”

Ann gazed at Hugh head-on.

“What is it?”

“Who are you? You couldn’t have prepared these tools without knowing how to make sugar sculptures, right? Could it be that you’re also a sugar craftsman? Are you participating in the sugar sculpture festival?”

The corners of Hugh’s mouth curled up wickedly.

“If you want me to pay your lodging fees, shut up and make the sugar sculpture, Ann.”

“...Well, I guess it’s fine. As long as you pay our lodging fees.”

Ann poured water from one of the containers on the table into the stone bowl holding the silver sugar.

Beside her, Jonas began to do the same.

After adding water to the silver sugar Ann began to knead it. This made the sugar into a soft, clay-like substance.



Normally, she would mix color flakes into this and make various colors. It was normal to join these together and create a sugar sculpture that was rich in color. However, this time she wouldn't be making colors.

Ann transferred the clay-like substance onto the cutting board and continued to knead it.

Because no tools for shaping the form had been prepared, she had no choice but to do it with her fingertips.

Silver sugar melted easily if it came into contact with heat. When handling it, one had to cool one's fingers in cold water and work quickly.

Ann cooled her fingers in the cold water set out on the table.

It was said that a sugar craftsman's movements were like the sleight of hand of a street magician. They moved gently and smoothly.

*----What should I make?*

Ann puzzled it over as she kneaded the silver sugar.

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*----I wonder what Mama would make if it were her...*

If it were Emma, she'd probably use the white color to an advantage and make something white.

Emma liked plant motifs, so she would make a white flower.

That decided, Ann recalled the shape of the flowers Emma had often made.

She sculpted the shape of flower petals with her fingertips, making many of them. Joining them together, she began to form the flower.

Jonas was making a cat that could fit in the palm of his hand. It seemed that he was trying to show off his skill with the long, graceful curves of the cat's tail.

Looking at the cat taking form under Jonas's fingertips, Kathy whispered, "The things Jonas-sama makes really are incredible..."

It didn't take long.

Both of them stopped working and raised their faces at the same time.

“Done? Both of you?”

At Hugh’s question, Jonas nodded, full of confidence, and pointed a finger at the top of the cutting board.

“It’s done.”

“I’m done, too.”

Ann set the item she’d made on her cutting board as well.

Hugh pulled the cutting boards with each of their completed works on top of them toward him.

He looked at each in turn for a few moments, but then he laughed lightly, “Fu, fu, fu.”

“Both of you are pretty skilled. You don’t have the feel of novice craftsmen at all.”

Ann and Jonas looked at each other and smiled.

However, the very next moment... Hugh simultaneously crushed both sculptures under his palms.

Ann and Jonas raised their voices in protest.

“Ah!!”

“What are you doing?!”

Hugh regarded them with a stern expression.

“They were painful to look at, so I broke them. Jonas, you are skilled. But that’s all. Just because you have a little skill you’re content merely with showing off-- that shows no ingenuity at all. Ann, you were better than Jonas. But, what was that? It seemed like you were copying exactly something someone else had made. Monkey see monkey do. There’s no appeal at all in a sculpture that’s merely pretty. Eating something like that wouldn’t bring me luck, nor would it extend a fairy’s lifespan, right? If this is the best you’d got, becoming a silver sugar master is still a far off dream for the two of you.”

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Both Ann and Jonas wanted to protest, but their voices wouldn't come out.

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Ann felt like the wind had been knocked out of her. He'd precisely hit upon something like a weakness that she'd been unconsciously sensing in her own sculpture.

Jonas must have felt the same. His expression became stiff.

“Well, I guess I'll keep these cracked pieces of sugar sculpture. They can be my snack for tomorrow.”

Hugh put the scattered pieces of sugar sculpture into a container he had on hand and then stood up.

“Well then, I'm going to bed. We have to be up early tomorrow. Come one, Salim. See you later Ann, Jonas. This was a good diversion, I had fun.”

Followed by Salim, Hugh exited the room.

The doctor was dumbfounded.

Kathy came running up to Jonas, who stood motionless. Then she yelled in a high-pitched voice, “What was he thinking, that man?!”



Jumping up onto the table, she began to stroke Jonas's hand.

“Jonas-sama, this is nothing to get upset over. You mustn't take the words of a strange man of unknown origins seriously.”

“I guess that's true...”

Jonas smiled bitterly and glanced over at Ann.

“Sorry, Ann. I... I'm going back to my room.”

Ann lifted her head suddenly.

“Me too... I'm going back too!”

While yelling this, Ann ran off towards her room.

How mortifying. Ann was ashamed of herself.

---

“Hey, Shall Fen Shall! Do you really intend to go back to the room?!”

Watching Ann run off, Shall sighed. Then he started to walk slowly after her, intending to return to the room himself. That was when Mythrill shouted at his back in horror.

Turning back, he answered, “Yes.”

“I’m telling you, you should stop!”

“What’s wrong about going back to the room?”

“After being told things like that, Ann was really hurt and might even be crying, you know!? If you’re not careful, she may even become violent! If you nonchalantly show your face in there, you’re going to be hated for sure.”

“I don’t really care.”

“W-well I’m not going. I’ll sleep here in the dining room tonight.”

“As you like.”

On his way back to the room, Shall came to the conclusion that Hugh's judgement was correct.

Looking at the sculpture Ann had made, Shall had felt the same way.

Ann herself probably had as well. Likely, that's why she was so hurt.

When he opened the door, the interior of the room was pitch black.

Ann was laying on her bed, curled up in a ball with the blanket pulled up over her head.

Shall sat down on the bed next to Ann's, and gazed at the lump under the blanket.

She looked just like a bagworm.[3]

---- *Liz...*

Looking at Ann in her current state, Shall unexpectedly remembered...

*---- Liz too, when she was young... She'd pout and cry, and often curled up in a ball under the blankets. How old was she back then? 9, or maybe 10? When she got older she stopped doing that.*

He looked at the bagworm in front of him once more.

*---- Is she really 15 years old?!*

Even after turning 15, Ann still had some of this immaturity remaining. The reason why was probably because in the 15 years until now she'd lived happily, protected by her mother.

Thinking this, Shall got the feeling that he'd found a last warm flicker of lamplight. There was something charming about seeing Ann, who was always insisting that she was 'mature' and 'an adult' act like a 10 year old child. In spite of himself, he chuckled lightly.

Immediately Ann sat up.

"What's so funny?! Do you really find other people getting depressed that interesting?!"

Her eyes were bright red, and tears welled up in the corners, threatening to spill over. They shimmered in the light of the moon slashing in through the window. It seemed she was trying with all her might to keep from crying.

Her face as she bit her lip, holding back the brimming tears, was even more childish.

He knew he shouldn't, but he couldn't help the "Pfft!" that leaked out. Frantically Shall covered his mouth with both hands.

"What?! Looking at people's faces makes you laugh?! Certainly a scarecrow like me is an unseemly sight. My face when I'm plunged into grief and crying must be amusing! I'll be sneered at my whole life by people like you who have beautiful faces!" Ann screamed, then thrust her face into the pillow dramatically.

It was unforgivably rude to Ann, who was hurt and in great uproar, but for some reason Shall's mood was extremely peaceful.

It seemed like he was about to remember something he'd forgotten.

Shall stood, then sat on the bed where Ann lay in a heap.

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*---- That's right. When I first met Liz, her hair was this color. I'd forgotten.*

Unconsciously, Shall took a strand of Ann's hair that was spread out on the sheets in his hand.

“You won't be laughed at your whole life. Humans are different from us. Humans are always changing... After about 3 years have passed, you will become shockingly beautiful. This hair will turn a pretty light blonde. At that time, where won't be anyone who will call you a scarecrow. Your skill at making sugar sculptures will have changed, as well. What Hugh said was the truth, but there's no need to take it to heart.”

Doubtfully, Ann raised her head slowly from the pillow, only showing half of her face to him.

“As for sugar sculpture making, I will polish my skills more. I'll definitely improve, you'll see. If it's something I can make happen through hard work, I'll find a way. But I don't need you to comfort me with obvious lies like me becoming a beauty.”

“It's not a lie.”

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Shall dropped his gaze to the strand of hair in his hand.

“When I was born... The first thing I saw was a human child. A 5 year old girl. She had hair this color. It seems that I was born from that girl’s gaze.”

This was a memory from the distant past. For some reason, he found himself wanting to try speaking it out loud. Somewhere inside him there was something like a fleeting hope that doing so might bring something that was lost back to life.

Ann made a shocked-looking face as Shall began to tell this tale.

“The girl’s name was Elizabeth... Liz. She was the daughter of an aristocrat, and due to special circumstances she was living in seclusion from society. She was young and knew nothing of the world. Liz didn’t know what a fairy was. So it seemed she misunderstood and thought that I was her older brother. She brought me back to her mansion and hid me there.”

Ann raised her face from the pillow and sat back up on the bed.

The strand of hair that Shall had been holding slipped out of his hand.

Shall lightly clenched his now empty hand. He gazed at his clenched fist.

“After that, we were always together. After 15 years passed, Liz’s hair turned blonde, and her freckles disappeared. She became a beautiful young woman. So I know. You will also change like Liz did.”

“What happened after that?”

At her question, Shall raised his face.

“After that, was Liz always with you? Why isn’t she here anymore?”

Shall closed his eyes.

At this question, pain shot through his chest. Even though a hundred years had already passed...



“She died... She was murdered. The ones who killed her were humans.”

Ann hung her head at these words.

After a moment, Ann’s hand gently touched Shall’s clenched fist.

“I’m sorry...”

Shall didn’t know what Ann was apologizing for.

Perhaps her guilt at making Shall talk about such painful memories.

Either that, or perhaps her guilt, as a fellow human, for killing Liz.

All he was certain of was the warmth in her heart.

Shall shook his head slightly, and stood up. Ann’s hand slid off of his fist.

He’d said too much.

“Go to bed now, Scarecrow,” he said quietly over his shoulder.

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Memories are just memories. They don't come back to life

---

When Ann awoke the next morning, Hugh had already departed. It seemed he had left before dawn. However, he'd paid their lodging fees as promised.

What was Hugh's true identity?

However, Ann didn't think too deeply about this issue.

Additionally, the shock of Hugh's words had all but worn off.

More than that, the fragments of Shall's past that he had revealed to her reverberated deep in Ann's chest.

After departing from the doctor's inn, three days passed without them being attacked by bandits or wild beasts.

That entire time, Ann did nothing but steal glances at Shall, who sat beside her.

Shall had said that he couldn't be friends with a human.

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But when he was first born, he had opened his heart to a human girl.

He'd said they'd been together for 15 years. It was exactly as long as the time Ann had spent with her mother.

Perhaps that girl, Liz, had been like family to Shall. And he'd lost her at the hands of humans. Ann's chest had ached seeing Shall with his eyes closed, wearing a sad expression.

Shall had opened his heart to a human, and the ones who caused him to freeze his heart away had also been humans.

*---- I wish there were some kind of magic I could use to melt Shall's heart.*

Ann thought of nothing but this while driving the wagon, and she was constantly aware of Shall's face at the corner of her vision.

This was the 7th day since they'd begun to cross the Bloody Highway.

They'd made it two-thirds of the way across.

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Lowering the iron gate to the rest stop, Ann was struck by the fact that they'd made it two-thirds of the way there.

They entered the rest stop and quickly had dinner.

Ann had a simple soup and an apple. Jonas's dinner was, as always, luxurious.

As they travelled, Jonas had continued to offer to share his food with Ann. But Ann declined each time. It was dangerous to become accustomed to luxury on the road. You never knew what might happen while travelling, so it was essential to bring along as much food as possible, and use it sparingly.

Jonas soon retreated into the back of his wagon, taking Kathy with him.

Mythrill had finally stopped constantly insisting that she let him 'repay the favor.' However, he sat on the driver's seat during the day wearing a matter-of-fact expression. At night he gathered grasses which he used to make a bed for himself on the roof of the wagon and he curled up to sleep there. Tonight as well, he diligently made himself a bed, laid down in it, and soon he was snoring away.

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Ann still couldn't think up a favor to ask that would satisfy Mythrill. He'd probably follow her around forever until she could think one up. Ann had already gotten used to Mythrill's shrill voice. It was mysterious, but once you got used to it, Mythrill's arrogance was also cute.

Ann sat around the fire with Shall, getting ready for bed.

Shall set an apple on the palm of his hand, and began eating it. First, wrinkles started to form on the surface of the apple in his hand. Finally, the apple imploded with a splat and, coiling up on top of his hand, melted.

This was how fairies ate. No matter how many times she saw it, it seemed mysterious to Ann.

"It's pretty cold tonight, huh? As expected, the closer we get to the end of fall, the colder it gets. Aren't you cold?"

"We don't feel the cold like humans do."

"Hmm, that's convenient!"

Just after answering, Ann sneezed. It really was cold.

Shall glanced over at the wagon where Jonas slept, then asked, “You won’t sleep inside the wagon? You should sleep in a warm place like that guy does.”

Ann pulled a blanket out from under the driver’s seat and shook her head lightly while carrying it back to the fire.

“I don’t know what Jonas’s wagon is for, but mine is a workshop for making sugar sculptures. It’s a sacred place. I can’t sleep in a place like that. Neither mama nor I have ever once slept inside the wagon. During the winter we’d intentionally stay at an inn. Mama’s motto was, ‘Sugar sculptures are a sacred food. So the places and people that make them mustn’t be dirtied.’”

Gazing into the flames, Shall said in response, “It sounds like she was a fine craftsman, your mother.”

Hearing this, Ann recalled Emma’s face. A feeling of overwhelming sadness came over her.

“Yeah, she really was.”

That night, try as she might, Ann couldn't fall asleep.

*---- I'm lonely...*

Those feelings were welling up her heart, like a countless number of bubbles.

*---- I wonder if Shall feels this way too?*

Ann rolled over for the umpteenth time, and turned her gaze towards Shall.

Shall lay five or six paces away. She wanted to shorten that distance.

*---- Is he asleep? Or else maybe he's got his eyes closed and is thinking about something? I want to talk.*

Ann was assaulted by the impulse to stretch out her hand and touch his wing, which was spread out on the grass.

She rose slightly and began to reach out. However, she hesitated and her hand stopped.

*---- If I touch his wing while he's sleeping, I know what'll say.*

Shall would surely be enraged if his precious remaining wing were touched by a human.

*---- Magic to melt Shall's heart...*

Just then, Ann suddenly remembered about the sugar sculpture.

She'd promised she'd make him one, but then Mythrill had appeared and she'd completely forgotten.

It didn't seem like she was going to be able to sleep, so Ann got up.

*---- I'll make the promised sugar sculpture.*

She hoped the sweet sugar sculpture would warm Shall's heart, even if just a little.



Ann opened the doors on the back of the wagon and went inside.

The light of the moon, which was only a sliver shy of a full moon, poured in through the windows. Relying on that, Ann slid her hand along the cold, stone work table, touching the scales and stroking the neatly arranged wooden spatulas.

Emma was in here. All of these things which Emma had once touched were resting silently.

Something else entered Ann's ears along with the silence, sending her heart racing.

Shaking her head, Ann turned towards the barrels of silver sugar.

“We ended up making sugar sculptures for Hugh, but there should be plenty of silver sugar left. I can probably make two or three for Shall.”

While whispering this, Ann opened the lid to the barrel.

“Huh?”

Ann was sure that the barrel she'd opened had been more than half full of silver sugar.

But the barrel was completely empty. Perhaps she'd opened the empty barrel by mistake.

Thinking this, Ann opened the lid of the barrel that she'd thought was the empty one. That barrel was empty too.

“Wh...why?”

Ann was astounded. Her pulse sped up.

One by one she opened the lids of the remaining barrels. The remaining three were full of silver sugar.

Out of the five barrels, two were empty.

Only the ingredients for making a sugar sculpture to enter into the sugar sculpture festival had completely vanished.

// Chapter 4, END

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**Notes:**

[1] 年頃の女の子 - Hugh simultaneously calls Ann a ‘grown woman’ and a ‘girl.’ He implies that she’s a nubile young woman who will only naturally be attracted to a fairy that looks like Shall.

[2] 称号 - This is a rank in the aristocracy. In the British peerage, a viscount is above a baron but below an earl. Presumably the ranks of the nobility in this story adopt the same system.

[3] 蓑虫 - Bagworm is a species of moth. Shall thinks that Ann curled up in a ball under the blankets looks like a moth in a cocoon.



AQUA Scans & Icarus Bride presents:

# Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 1

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Black Fairy”*

Story by Mikawa Miri

Illustrations by Aki

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## **Chapter 5. Sugar Apple of the Poison Tree**

With her hand on the rim of the empty barrel, Ann sank to her knees right there.

“It can’t be. Why isn’t it here? The barrel was more than halfway full when we used some silver sugar at the doctor’s inn... I checked... And the wagon doors were locked...”

Like this, even if they made it to Lewiston she couldn’t participate in the sugar sculpture festival.

If she made a sugar sculpture, she’d be short of the predetermined 3 barrels of silver sugar and would be disqualified.

But if she made sure to preserve the three barrels of silver sugar, she wouldn’t have the ingredients to make a sugar sculpture.

“...Why...Why?! No one’s been in the wagon! So, why...?!” Ann screamed.

“What are you making a fuss about?”

From outside the open wagon doors came Shall’s voice.

Ann stood up. Her legs were weak and she staggered. It was like she was picking her way across a street piled with fallen leaves. Just as she began to descend the wagon’s steps, Ann stumbled and clung to Shall.

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“What happened?”

“The silver sugar... It’s gone.”

“Gone?”

“...There are three barrels left. But to participate in the festival, three barrels of silver sugar and a sculpture are required. There’s no sugar left to make the sculpture with...”

Shall furrowed his brows.

“Was it there back at the doctor’s inn?”

“It was there back then. I checked. And I locked the doors afterwards. No one should have been able to get in or out, and yet...”

And yet... The silver sugar was gone.

Ann’s fingers gripping Shall’s sleeve trembled slightly. Her vision blurred.

She couldn’t understand why the silver sugar wasn’t there.

“Ann? What’s wrong?”

Seemingly having heard the commotion, Jonas came out of his wagon, followed by Kathy. Then, seeing Ann clinging to Shall, he tilted his head suspiciously.

Ann thought she was going to cry if she tried to speak.

In place of Ann, who couldn't answer Jonas's question, Shall said, "It seems the silver sugar is gone."

"Eh? But, the silver sugar was in your wagon, right? You locked it, so no one should have been able to get in or out, right?"

"...No, they were able to get in and out."

The one who said this in a tormented voice was Kathy.

Picking up on the implications of these words, everyone's gazes turned towards her.

"What do you mean, Kathy?"

At Jonas's question, Kathy hung her head.

"I don't want to say something that betrays another of my species, but... I saw it. The night we stayed at the doctor's inn, I was looking out the window of our room. There's a window high up on the side of Ann-sama's wagon, right?"

I saw Mythrill Reed Pod coming out of there. In the moonlight it looked like his whole body was shimmering. He was covered in silver sugar.”

---- *Mythrill...?*

“What’s going on? You guys are so noisy, all gathering around over here. What are you talking about?”

Rubbing at eyes heavy with sleep, Mythrill poked his head out from on top of the roof of the wagon.

---- *It can’t be. But... Only a small fairy could have gotten into the wagon when it was locked. Furthermore, that night... It’s true that Mythrill was the only one sleeping in the dining room...*

Ann examined Mythrill’s face. She wanted to believe he wouldn’t do something like that.

“Mythrill, come down here,” Jonas ordered in a stern voice.

“What?! I’m not being used by you. Don’t get so haughty. Furthermore, don’t shorten my name! It’s Mythrill Reed Pod...”

“Get down here right now!!”



At the ire in Jonas's voice and the tension in the air, Mythrill's expression suddenly turned fearful. Coming down from the roof, he looked up at Ann timidly.

“Wh-what is it?”

“Do you like silver sugar?”

At Jonas's question, Mythrill nodded.

“I like it. As if there were any fairy that didn't like silver sugar! What's this about? What happened?”

“On the night we stayed at the doctor's inn, you slept in the dining room alone, right? You had some kind of ulterior motive for doing that, didn't you?”

“Eh?”

“Some of the silver sugar that Ann prepared for the sugar sculpture festival has gone missing. The night we stayed at the doctor's inn, Kathy saw you coming out the window of Ann's wagon covered in silver sugar.”

Hearing this, Mythrill widened his eyes and opened his mouth in shock. But, then, seeming to become enraged, he turned to Kathy and shrieked, “Wh-what?! What are you saying? Even though you're also a fairy... You said I did something like that?!”

Kathy moved to hide behind Jonas, and said in a weak voice, “But, I saw you.”

“Liar!” Mythrill shouted, then returned his gaze to Ann. He looked at Ann with frightened-looking eyes.

“Ann, I’m not the one who stole the silver sugar. Kathy’s a liar.”

“What does Kathy have to gain from lying?”

As if to deflect Jonas’s accusing words, Mythrill shouted, “Shut up, human!!”

Then he further beseeched Ann, “Ann. Don’t tell me even you are doubting me? It wasn’t me. I swear, it wasn’t me.”

Mythrill spun these words tearly.

Ann wanted to believe those words. But there was no proof to dispel her doubts.

*---- Don’t tell me... No. No, it can’t be... But...*

Doubts spun around in Ann’s heart like a maelstrom. Even though she felt that she wanted to believe him, she couldn’t help but wonder...

These feelings must have been reflected on her face.

Tears began to well up in the eyes with which Mythrill regarded Ann's face.

“You're doubting me, aren't you, Ann? You don't believe me. Ann...”

“...I want to believe you.”

“But you don't believe me, do you?! Even a little, you doubt me!”

Tears overflowed from Mythrill's eyes.

“I get it. If you're going to look at me like that, I'll disappear from your sight immediately!”

Shouting this, Mythrill took a giant leap. He jumped right over the wagon, and disappeared somewhere on the otherside.

“Mythrill, wait...!”

Ann tried to call out to stop him, but her voice died out suddenly. What right did she have to call Mythrill back, when she couldn't even believe in him completely? Even if she told him “I believe you,” if she wasn't able to wipe the doubt off her face while she said it, he'd only be hurt.

The strength left her body. Ann's hand slipped from Shall's sleeve and she sank down to sit on the step of the wagon. She covered her face with both hands.

“With this, I... I can’t participate in the sugar sculpture festival this year anymore...”

Shall was silent, gazing off in the direction Mythrill had disappeared.

Jonas braced his chin in his hand, deep in thought. Then, after a moment, he snapped his fingers.

“I’ve got it!! Say, Ann. You don’t have to give up! If you only need to make one sculpture, you can just make that much silver sugar right now, right?!”

“It’s impossible. In the first place, we don’t have the raw materials, sugar apples.”

“There are sugar apples! There is a grove of sugar apple trees along the bloody highway. I heard about it at a guild meeting for the Radcliffe guild. It seems that no one comes to harvest the sugar apples because hiring a guard and travelling all the way here is too much trouble to be worth it. It’s autumn now, so the fruit should be ripe.”

The sugar apple tree was a mysterious tree.

If humans tried to cultivate sugar apple trees, no matter what they did the trees wouldn’t bear fruit.

Only sugar apple trees that grew wild in nature would bear fruit.

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That's why sugar craftsmen were desperate to know the location of sugar apple forests and how they could secure the fruit for themselves.

If it came up at a guild meeting of the Radcliffe guild, then there was a high probability that there was indeed a sugar apple forest here.

However...

“Even if there is a grove of sugar apple trees, it will take 3 days to distill the silver sugar. If we spend that much time on the bloody highway, there won't be time to make the sugar sculpture for the festival once we arrive in Lewiston.”

“In that case, during the 3 days it take to distill the silver sugar, you can just use the silver sugar you have left now to make the sugar sculpture for the festival, right? You can distill the silver sugar and make the sugar sculpture at the same time. That way, as long as you can finish the sugar sculpture and distill enough silver sugar to replace the amount you used making it, all you need to do is continue on to Lewiston.”

“That's...”

Ann was about to say that it was impossible. But then Ann's brain finally began to work right again.

It might not necessarily be impossible after all.

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Raising her head, Ann looked at Jonas. As if to give her courage, Jonas nodded.

“You can do it. Cheer up, Ann. I’m also not too shabby of a sugar craftsman. I’ll help you.”

Jonas vigorously clapped his hands on Ann’s shoulders. Ann’s heart overflowed with gratitude for his kindness and for bringing her information she could use in her current predicament.

“Thank you, Jonas.”

Finally, Ann was able to smile a bit. Then she looked up at Shall.

“Sorry, Shall. I got pretty shaken up. Even though you’d just fallen asleep... I woke you up, right?”

“It doesn’t matter.”

---

Three days later...

Ann drove the wagon forward single-mindedly, thinking only of making progress.

During the day, she rarely stopped to take a break.

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It was dangerous at night, so they couldn't continue travelling. They would take shelter in a rest stop and wait impatiently for morning to come.

Fortunately, they were not attacked by bandits or wild beasts, and after noon on the third day they arrived at the rest stop that was believed to be close to the grove of sugar apple trees.

The imperial city of Lewiston was half a day's travel from here.

The final rest stop was built on top of a short hill. From there, one could see far off into the wilderness. On the distant side of a sparse forest and across a wide, meandering river the spires of the royal palace could be seen, appearing tiny from this distance.

It finally became real to Ann that Lewiston was right before her.

However, although Lewiston was right in front of her, Ann couldn't leave where she was now. Her hands curled into fists.

*---- I need to quickly obtain those sugar apples.*

The next morning, together with the break of day, Ann and Jonas left with the wagon.

Leaving the highway, the two of them walked around, frequently consulting

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the map, searching for the sugar apple trees located in the middle of the wilderness.

Then, when the sun was already high in the sky... The sight of bright red fruits caught Ann's eye.

“...Sugar Apples.”

Rather than happiness, it was a sense of relief that hit her like a wave.

Sugar apple trees were short. At most, they grew to a bit higher than the top of Ann's head.

An endless number of little branches about the width of human fingers grew out of the trees' thin trunks, giving them a delicate appearance. At the ends of those little branches hung deep red fruits the size of chicken eggs. They looked very similar to ordinary apples. They were so red and lustrous they looked as if they'd been dipped in wax.

At the fact that they'd discovered the grove of sugar apple trees unexpectedly quickly, enthusiasm welled up inside Ann.

“We'll make it in time. As long as I make the sugar sculpture at the same time while distilling these sugar apples, we'll make it to Lewiston with time to spare!”

Ann got down from the driver's seat and got a basket out of the wagon.



Jonas helped her to toss the sugar apples one after another into the basket.

In the blink of an eye the basket was full of sugar apples, which they transferred to the wagon before filling the basket a second time. After repeating this process 5 or 6 times, the floor of the wagon was so covered with red that there was no place left to walk.

Looking at the red color of the sugar apples made Ann cheerful. Emma had also often said that.

For the past three days, they'd been sprinting across the highway.

Thanks to that, her hazy feelings regarding the situation with Mythrill and her own character had been blown out behind them.

More importantly, she was looking to the path ahead. If she wanted to make her dreams come true, instead of wasting her time worrying about things that couldn't be changed, she should chase after the things she could.

If she worked hard, she would make it in time.

“I'm going to start working immediately!”

After returning to the rest stop with the wagon packed full of sugar apples, Ann rolled up her sleeves.

While unloading a giant pot and ladle from the wagon, Ann turned to Shall, who lay on the driver's seat with his legs dangling lazily off the side, and called out, "I'll make your sugar sculpture right after I finish making the one for the festival. Wait a bit longer, okay?"

"Just make it edible."

Ann laughed off his hateful reply.

"I told you before, I'll let you see my skill for yourself," Ann responded in a lively voice, and then began to hum as she tossed sugar apples into the large pot.

Shall sat up just a bit and watched Ann, who seemed to be enjoying her work.

The sugar apple tree was also known as the poison tree. [1]

They bore lustrous red, delicious looking fruits that were the raw material for making silver sugar. If, knowing this, one were to take a bite they'd find the sugar apple to be bitter, astringent and completely inedible. It was a tree the bore fruit which defied all expectations.

That same, fickle fruit, in the hands of a sugar craftsman, would yield a high quality sweetness.

First, a sugar craftsman would fill a large pot with water and add a single

handful of silver sugar. Then they'd put freshly-harvested sugar apples into the pot and leave them to soak like that overnight. This would draw out the bitterness from the sugar apples.

After this, they would discard the water, then fill the pot with fresh water and set it over the fire.

The sugar apples would break down as they boiled and the seeds and skin would come floating to the surface, which the sugar craftsman would scoop out along with the astringent foam.

When the mixture became syrupy, the sugar craftsman would transfer it from the pot to a flat stone dish. They would smooth it out to an even thickness and leave it to dry for another entire day.

After this, the color would change and it would harden into a pure white block. Finally, the sugar craftsman would grind it with a mortar and pedestal into a fine powder.

After all of this, a pure white silver sugar with a faint bluish tint was produced.

Silver sugar was different from regular sugar, which was gritty, yellowish and distilled from millet. Its smooth texture, like fine grained sand, and its whiteness, not to mention the refreshing sweet aftertaste it possessed, set silver sugar apart as a holy food.

Once she'd finished submerging the sugar apples in the water, Ann promptly began to work on the sculpture for the sugar sculpture festival.

What she was supposed to make was a large sculpture appropriate for a celebration.

Ann entered the wagon and took out a bundle of papers from underneath the worktable. The bundle of yellowed papers of various shapes and sizes was tied with string. Ann untied the string and spread the pages out on the worktable.

The designs of sugar sculptures were drawn on those papers. They'd been drawn using a crude feather pen, so the lines were jagged and splotchy. Notes about the shape and color were jotted down in an unruly penmanship.

These were drawings that Emma had amassed over time, continuously adding new designs. When she was going to make a sugar sculpture, Emma would first spread out these design charts and chose what to make from among them.

“This is the fortune that mama created. I can't give it to anyone. It's something I must never allow anyone to replicate,” Emma had said, pointing to this bundle.

While traveling, Emma would sell sugar sculptures made by Ann for a cheap price to customers looking for something inexpensive. At those times, Ann would make a sugar sculpture with the design Emma assigned her.

Right now, Emma wasn't here to tell her “Use this design.”

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Ann had to chose for herself.

At a loss, she selected a flower motif that Emma had been fond of. The flowers were a light pink color. The leaves were light green and blue and white butterflies were perched on the flowers. It was a lovely design.

Just then, Hugh's words from the night at the doctor's inn echoed in her ears.

“Monkey see, monkey do.”

*---- Then, what should I do so that I don't seem like a monkey mimicking someone else? I don't know...*

While thinking this, Ann placed the yellowed paper on the worktable and took out bottles of red, green and blue color flakes.

She cooled her hands with water from a bucket, then, taking up a stone bowl, headed towards the barrel full of silver sugar.

She was just about to begin scooping silver sugar from the barrel, when...

“Ann, Ann.”

There was a knock on the door of the wagon, and then it opened. Jonas peeked his head in.

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“Do you have enough barrels to hold all the silver sugar you’re distilling now? I had this one in my wagon, would you like to use it?”

Jonas entered the wagon, clutching a small barrel. Ann gave a wry smile.

“So far I’ve only soaked the apples in water. It will be a while before they’re finished distilling. Besides, I have 2 empty barrels.”

“Oh, I see. Well, since I went to all the trouble of bringing it over, I’ll leave it here for now.”

The wagon rocked as Jonas set the barrel on the floor with a thump. Ann’s eyes widened.

“That’s an empty barrel, right? It seems pretty heavy for just an empty barrel. Is it extremely sturdily made?”

“It’s from my father’s workshop, so it’s a first-class piece of merchandise. It prevents the silver sugar from getting damp.”

“Thanks. But why did you bring something like that with you on a journey?”

“I had the feeling it would come in handy, one way or another. More importantly, have you decided what you’re going to make?”

“Yeah. Just you wait and see; I’ll finish the sculpture before the sugar apples that are soaking in water now are done being distilled.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Jonas suddenly drew close to Ann, and put his hand on her cheek.

“Wh-what?!”

Jonas chuckled and once again approached Ann, who’d jumped back in shock.

“Do your best, Ann.”

Both of Jonas’s hands came down on Ann’s shoulders, and his face drew so close to hers that she could feel his breath.

Ann unconsciously shielded her face with the stone bowl in her hands.

“Wh-wh-what?! Jonas?! H-hold on, what are you doing? Knock it off.”

“Don’t be so crass, Ann.”

Pushing away the stone bowl with one hand, Jonas put his other hand on Ann’s hip and drew her closer. He smiled down at her.

“I love you, Ann.”

“But I don’t feel that way...”

“I love you.”

Jonas’s lips loomed closer.

“N-no!”

Ann’s palm connected with Jonas’s cheek in a direct hit.

Jonas braced his cheek in astonishment, removed his hands from Ann’s waist, and took a step back.

“Why, Ann?”

“Isn’t it obvious? I don’t love you!”

“But I love you.”

“Those are your feelings, right?! They have nothing to do with me,” Ann shouted, realizing that she wasn’t capable of harboring any romantic feelings whatsoever for Jonas.

She had been bewildered and excited by his proposal and his kind words.



But the truth was, when he'd drawn her close and been about to kiss her, a sensation of fear had swept over her.

Jonas made a face like he couldn't believe what he was hearing. Perhaps that was only natural.

Since the time he was young, Jonas had been the most popular person in the village, and all the girls had been set on becoming his girlfriend. Perhaps that was why he seemed to think that it was only natural that any and every girl would be in love with him.

"I see. I was hoping that you'd fall in love with me."

Seemingly hurt, Jonas laughed slightly. Ann finally regained her composure.

"...I... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to hit you..."

"It's fine. I was being too forceful. ...That reminds me! It would be a waste of time for you to stop and cook while you're working on your sugar sculpture, right? I'll bring you something to eat later."

"Okay. Thanks."

Jonas smiled, then left. Ann heaved a giant sigh.

The fact that he was worried about her meals after she'd just hit him made

Ann think that Jonas really was a good person, after all.

“I guess if I was in love with Jonas, I wouldn’t be doing something like this, would I?”

Muttering this, Ann returned to work.

While she was scooping silver sugar out of the barrel, there was a knock on the door and it was opened a second time.

The person who entered was Kathy, carrying a small, heavy-looking basket.

“This is from Jonas-sama. I was instructed to deliver food to you. Where should I put it?”

“Thank you, Kathy. Please put it under the worktable over there. I’ll eat it later.”

As Ann continued measuring out the silver sugar without raising her head, Kathy leapt up onto the worktable.

“I’m going to give you a word of advice.”

Ann raised her head and found Kathy regarding her with a terribly cold expression.

“Even though Jonas-sama told you he likes you and even proposed marriage to you, you shouldn’t get so full of yourself.”

“Eh...? I don’t remember getting full of myself, but...”

Ann was bewildered by Kathy’s sudden accusation.

“Don’t you think that there’s no reason Jonas-sama should honestly be interested in someone like you?”

Hearing these prickly words, Ann tilted her head. She got the feeling that she’d been told something similar by someone wearing a similar expression before.

Where was that..? It had to have been in Knoxberry village. Suddenly she remembered.

“Kathy, could it be that you’re in love with Jonas?”

Immediately, Kathy’s cheeks turned as bright a red as her hair.

“What did you say?!”

Even her voice was distorted. Her behavior was exactly like that of the girls in Knoxberry village. They were jealous of Ann for staying at Jonas’s house and often harassed her because of it.

Once she realized this, Ann became friendly towards Kathy.

“That’s nice. You must be happy that the person you love has your wing, right? It’s much better than someone you hate or someone who looks down on you having it.”

“That’s not what I’m talking about! I’m telling you to stop being so full of yourself...!”

“It would be wonderful if love between a fairy and a human could work out.”

“You really are an idiot, aren’t you?! I’m not going to waste my time talking to you!”

Squaring her shoulders, Kathy stormed out of the wagon.

*---- Compared to Kathy, Shall is really unfortunate. His wing is possessed by someone like me, who he clearly thinks of as an idiot from the bottom of his heart.*

The door was open a crack, through which Ann could see Shall’s shoulder as he sat by the fire.

Shall’s wing, which lay flowing out on the grass behind him, reflected the light of the fire, shining a brilliant scarlet color.

“Love between a fairy and a human...”

A thought struck her suddenly. Could Shall have possibly been in love with the human girl, Liz, to whom he'd once opened his heart? As soon as she'd thought this, her chest constricted painfully.

Unaware of the reason for this pain, Ann was suspicious of her own feelings.

“...What is it...?”

The girl named Liz who dwelled within Shall's memories... For some reason, Ann was extremely jealous of her.

*---- Regardless, I am Shall's master, after all. Shall is only with me because I have his wing. So, as I promised, I have to free him once we arrive in Lewiston.*

At this thought, it felt as if a cold wind was blowing inside her chest. That wind whispered faintly to her. “You're lonely, aren't you?”

In order not to hear that whisper, Ann shook free from the wind and returned to work.

---

Ann added cold water to the silver sugar and began to knead it. The silver sugar took on the texture of soft clay.

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Mixing color flakes into this, Ann created color. She repeated this many times with different colors.

Ann began to shape the colored silver sugar, sculpting it with a spatula. She used a rod to roll the silver sugar out, and then formed it into a ball.

Using various techniques, she proceeded to mold a sculpture out of the softened silver sugar.

The sugar apples entered the stage at which the water they were soaking in would be changed and they would be boiled down.

Ann left the wagon doors opened the entire time, and would occasionally jump down from the wagon to stir the pot, scooping out the foam and bits of core. Then she would return to the wagon and resume work on the sugar sculpture.

Jonas peaked his head into Ann's wagon periodically. However, without saying a word, he would check on Ann's progress and then leave quietly.

Ann found the situation awkward, so she couldn't bring herself to call out to him either.

From time to time, she could hear the sound of wolves howling.

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However, she felt safe inside the walls of the rest stop and didn't really pay attention to them.

The sugar apples had broken down, and were transferred to a flat stone container, where they were spread out evenly.

On the second day, Ann continued working on the sugar sculpture almost without rest. She ate while stirring the pot, and slept for only two or three hours.

Thanks to this, the sugar sculpture was beginning to take form before her eyes.

Following her memory, Ann added minutely detailed workmanship, creating a sculpture identical to the ones Emma had made.

The petals of the flowers changed color in a gradation. The wings of the butterflies were perforated in a geometric pattern.

The leaves were molded in a gentle curve. The sugar sculpture was large, bigger than the width of Ann's arms. With a sculpture this big, it was difficult to judge the balance of the entire structure. However Ann handled that marvelously as well.

On the morning of the third day of its construction, the sugar sculpture was complete.

It was a fine piece of workmanship. Ann would go so far as to say pridefully that as a sugar sculpture, it was perfect.

However, Ann wasn't able to shake a strange sense of incongruity.

It was identical to the sugar sculptures that Emma had made, and yet... Ann felt that this sculpture was lacking the magnetic force that enchanted anyone who laid eyes on one of Emma's sugar sculptures.

Monkey see, monkey do.

Those words echoed over and over again inside her head.

However, her technique was perfect. She told herself that it would be fine.

So that the completed sculpture wouldn't fall over and break, Ann tied a rope around the base. Then she secured the rope to the worktable. Like this, even if the wagon was swaying the sugar sculpture wouldn't fall over and break.

With this complete, she breathed a sigh of relief.

Ann descended from the wagon on shaky legs, worn out from days of working non-stop.

"I'm tired."

Ann sank down to sit beside Shall, who lay back on the grass looking up at the



sky.

“Is it finished?” Shall asked without seeming to be particularly interested.

Ann nodded and laid down right where she was on the grass.

While looking at the color of the withered autumn grass up close, Ann counted the days.

“Including today, there are only two days left until the festival. This afternoon I’ll grind up the distilled sugar apples that are drying right now and make them into silver sugar. Then, if we leave tomorrow, we’ll be able to arrive in Lewiston the day before the festival. I’ll be able to present a sugar sculpture and three barrels of silver sugar. Thank goodness.”

A smile overflowed onto Ann’s face. The wind blew, rustling through the grass.

“It’s strange,” Shall said quietly.

“What is?”

“When I first saw you in the fairy market, you smelled sweet, like silver sugar. I thought that was strange.”

“Really? I must’ve had some staining my dress.”

Sniffing loudly, Ann smelled the sleeve of her dress. Shall shook his head.

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“It’s your fingers. Your fingers give off a sweet smell.”

“I don’t smell anything.”

“I do.”

“I see... Well, I’m always handling silver sugar. It’s all I know.”

Ann relaxed for a while, feeling peaceful. Shall’s wing was stretched out on the grass right in front of her. Reflecting the light of the sun, it shimmered a light green color. Ann was looking at that shimmering light.

Just then, the sound of footsteps approached from the direction of Ann’s head.

Jonas’s kind voice floated down to her.

“Ann, you did it. I peaked inside the wagon. It’s really incredible. I’ve never seen such a large and finely detailed sugar sculpture. There’s no doubt it will win the royal medal.”

Because she was completely exhausted, Ann didn’t even raise her head and simply thanked him.

“Thank you, Jonas. It was only possible because you knew the location of the sugar apples.”

“No, thank you.”

Jonas laughed slightly, then walked off in the direction of Ann’s wagon.

---- *What is he thanking me for?*

Ann thought it was strange, and raised her head.

That’s when Ann saw Jonas hooking up his own horses to her box-shaped wagon.

“What are you doing, Jonas?”

“I thought I’d get going.”

Shall furrowed his brows and sat up.

“You’re too impatient, Jonas. The silver sugar isn’t finished yet. We’re leaving tomorrow. Besides, those aren’t my horses.”

“That’s fine. My horses are faster. That should do it.”

“Jonas?”

Jonas expressionlessly finished hooking up his horses, then climbed up onto the driver’s seat of Ann’s wagon.

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At last Ann realized that he was acting strangely.

Standing up, she began to walk towards him.

“Jonas? What is it?”

“I wouldn’t have had to do something like this if you’d only fallen in love with me and agreed to marry me. This is your fault. I confessed to you three times, but you rejected me.”

Just then...

The closed iron door of the rest stop burst open forcefully.

The person who came flying in was Kathy. She appeared frantic. She was holding a chunk of meat with blood dripping from it.

She took many giant leaps, heading towards them as quickly as possible.

Behind Kathy, the footsteps of multiple wild beasts could be heard.

Shall leapt to his feet, eyes flashing.

“What is the meaning of this?!”

While yelling this, Shall held out his right hand, summoning his sword. At the same time as the sword appeared, the sound of heavy breathing filled the rest stop. It was a pack of wolves. There were thirty of them.

Ann stiffened at the appearance of the wolf pack.

Kathy closed in on Ann, and yelled in a shrieking voice, “I told you not to get so full of yourself!”

Then she threw the chunk of meat in her hands, and it hit Ann in the chest.

At that instant, Kathy took an even larger leap. She leapt up onto the roof of Ann’s wagon.

Chasing after the chunk of meat, the wolves all turned as one and charged towards Ann.

Shall leapt between Ann, who was so stunned she couldn’t even let out a shriek, and the wolves.

With a single swing of his sword he cut down three of the charging wolves.

The wolves halted their charge and, growling, spread out to surround Ann.

“Shall... What... is this...?”

“They did this. They lured them in.”

*---- By ‘them,’ does he mean Jonas and Kathy? Why would they...?*

Jonas applied the whip to the horses. At that noise, Ann’s thoughts, which had come to a stand-still, began moving again. Then she realized.

*---- Jonas intends to steal the sugar sculpture I created!*

Ann completely forgot that she was surrounded by wolves. Without thinking, she set out at a run.

“Jonas!!”

Ann chased after the wagon that had already begun moving, and jumped up onto the driver’s seat.

Seated on the driver’s seat, Jonas took a large bottle out of the pocket at his chest. He drove out the cork with his thumb, and dumped the contents over her head.

Ann was sprayed with a thick, reddish-black liquid that reeked of blood.

Unperturbed, Ann grasped desperately onto the sleeve of Jonas’s jacket.

The wolves reacted to the liquid that had been poured over Ann. The wolves

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surrounding Shall once again leapt for Ann. Shall clucked his tongue and slashed at the leaping wolves.

But, as if driven mad, the wolves continued to charge, their eyes bloodshot.

“Wait!!”

“Bye bye, Ann.”

The whip came down, targeting the hand that clutched the sleeve of Jonas’s jacket.

Hot pain bit into the back of Ann’s hand, and she lost her grip on Jonas’s sleeve.

With her hold on Jonas’s sleeve broken, Ann was shaken off of the racing wagon and fell to the ground. The wolves rushed to leap on the fallen Ann. Shall jumped into the fray, sword swinging.

Ann screamed at his back as he cut down one attacking wolf after another, “Shall! Go after Jonas! Go! Quickly!”

“If I leave, you’ll become the wolves’ dinner!”

“It’s fine. I don’t care! Go! Get it back! Get my sugar sculpture back!!”

“I refuse.”

Shall never stopped moving, continuously cutting down wolves and sending their blood flying in all directions.

A wolf leapt for Shall’s wing, which streamed out behind him in accordance with his movements. The beasts were instinctually aware of the fairy’s weakness.

Just before the wolf’s fangs sunk into his wing, Shall jerked his body around and swung his sword.

“Get it back, get it back! Go after them!! Please, *please*, do as I say!”

“Then order me! As my owner!!”

I’ll tear your wing. I’ll destroy your wing. No matter how she tried, Ann couldn’t make such atrocious words come out of her mouth.

“Please, go after them!”

All Ann could do was scream.

“Shall! Go after them, go after them!! Please, go after them!! Please!! *Please!!*”

The wagon bearing Ann’s sugar sculpture disappeared from sight.



Looking at the corpses at his feet of the wolves he'd killed, Shall Fenn Shall came to a halt.

As could be expected, he was breathless. His wing was splattered with blood. With a reflexive shudder he flapped his wing, shaking off the blood.

The wolves had persistently targeted his wing. He'd felt the chill of fear shoot up his spine many times.

Ann sank to the ground amidst the stench of blood, oblivious.

Shall felt a sense of relief that Ann and his wing that she carried were safe.

He shook his sword, dismissed it, then approached Ann.

“...Why didn't you go after them?”

Gazing out of the gate through which the wagon had disappeared, Ann spoke with a blank expression on her face.

“If I went after Jonas, you would have been eaten by the wolves.”

“I know that!”

Suddenly Ann stood and walked up to Shall.

“I know that! But that is what you decided. It wasn’t what I wanted! I didn’t care if I got eaten by wolves, I just didn’t want him to have my sugar sculpture. You won’t listen to a single one of my orders. It’s been that way ever since we started out on this journey. In the end, you’ve always acted on your own judgement. Right?! You just couldn’t leave my side because I had your wing. And earlier, if you’d gone after my sugar sculpture, I might have been eaten by wolves. If that had happened, your wing might have been damaged as well, right? That’s why you protected me instead of my sugar sculpture. That’s the only reason. I get it. I can’t use you! That’s why it turned out like this!”

Screaming this, Ann thumped on Shall’s chest with both of her fists with all of her might.

She struck him over and over. She continued to hit him until she was completely exhausted and there was no strength left in her arms.

Ann’s words were frenzied and irrational. She herself must have been aware of that. But perhaps she couldn’t help but say them. So Shall let her do as she wished.

At last, Ann’s hands dropped to her sides. Worn out, she made her way on shaky legs to the remaining wagon and went inside.

*---- It’s true; I’ve never once listened to her orders.*

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The only reason Shall had saved Ann so many times during this journey was because she was holding his wing. If she were hurt, the wing would be hurt as well. So he had protected her, in order to protect his wing. That was all.

However, at that time... The instant the wolves leapt for Ann...

The thought that his wing might be damaged never entered his mind.

His body had moved instantaneously to protect Ann, who stood dumbfounded and unmoving.

Something cold and wet dripped onto Shall's cheek.

When he looked up, rain was falling from the darkening sky. It looked like someone's tears.

//Chapter 5 – END.

**NOTE:**

[1] 裏切りの木 - This should literally be translated as “the tree of betrayal” or “the betrayer tree.” This phrase is also used in the chapter title, 砂糖林檎は裏切りの木 (literally “the sugar apple is the betrayer tree.”) In consideration of the story content of this chapter, I went with a non-literal translation of the title, “sugar apple of the poison tree” because I wanted the theme of reaping one’s just rewards from unjust labors to be included in the chapter’s English title. To keep with a consistent translation of this phrase, I have used “poisonous” here as well, but do not misunderstand, sugar apples are not poisonous!



AQUA Scans & Icarus Bride presents:

# Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 1

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Black Fairy”*

Story by Mikawa Miri

Illustrations by Aki

Scans: Mizuouji

Translation: Icarus Bride

Proofread: Icarus Bride & Mizuouji

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## **Chapter 6. Arising Morning**

A cold, steady rain fell in the darkness.

Shall carried the corpses of the wolves that littered the floor of the rest stop outside.

However, as the rain dampened the ground, the stench of blood filled the air.

The silver sugar that was in the middle of being distilled had been trampled under the feet of the wolves, dirtied with their blood, and was now mixing with the rainwater. Each drop of rain sent ripples spreading out across its surface.

Ann was inside the box-shaped wagon Jonas had left behind.

The inside of the wagon was constructed exactly like Ann's. It was a workshop for making sugar sculptures.

The wreckage of several partially-finished sugar sculptures were strewn about. Pages containing drawings of sugar sculpture designs were scattered across the top of the worktable. All of them looked like copies of the designs Emma had left behind.

Inside the wagon there were five barrels, all full of silver sugar.

*---- From the very beginning, it was all premeditated. Everything was a lie...*

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Jonas was in a position where he might be able to become the leader of the Radcliffe guild. But for that, becoming a silver sugar master was an indispensable requirement.

Jonas had said that he participated in the sugar sculpture festival two times before and had yet to be made a silver sugar master. And yet, he hadn't made a proactive effort to participate in the sugar sculpture festival this year.

She should have been suspicious of that.

Perhaps failing twice in the past had cost Jonas to lose his confidence.

However, he wanted to be a silver sugar master at any cost. If he did that, he might be able to become the leader of the Radcliffe guild. Then he might be able to become the Silver Sugar Viscount like he wanted.

People who received the royal medal and became silver sugar masters were sincere about sugar sculptures. Profit was of secondary importance to them. If this weren't the case, they wouldn't be able to make fabulous sugar sculptures.

Jonas was concerned only with garnering glory for himself.

That meant that his sincerity was probably insufficient.

Perhaps Jonas didn't care about sugar sculptures at all, as long as he could become a silver sugar master.

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Just then, a silver sugar master who was unable to travel due to illness and her daughter fell at Jonas's feet.

There's no doubt that he'd thought about how he could use this mother and child to his benefit.

First, he'd secretly snuck into their wagon and copied down Emma's sugar sculpture designs.

However, even if he had the designs, he couldn't produce the kind of sculpture he would have liked. Even if he had faith in the technique, he didn't have faith in the sculptures he created.

"That's why he proposed to me..."

The reason he proposed to Ann was so that he could seduce her and get her to make a sugar sculpture for him, which he would try to use to obtain the title of silver sugar master.

But Jonas had failed at this, as well.

There's no doubt that that was when Jonas had come up with the plan to snatch the sculpture Ann made and enter it into the sugar sculpture festival as his own.

The entire Anders family had cooperated fully with this plan.

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Mr. and Mrs. Anders had gone so far as to help Jonas by preparing the wagon and guards.

If their son were able to become leader of the Radcliffe guild, the benefit to the entire Anders family would be great.

Then Jonas had caught up with Ann, who'd left for the sugar sculpture festival, traveled with her, and stolen some of her silver sugar.

The one who'd stolen the silver sugar was likely Kathy. Since she could make herself invisible, there was no doubt that on the night they'd stayed at the doctor's inn she'd snuck in through the wagon's high window and carried the silver sugar out bit by bit.

As a result, Ann had been forced to stop and make the sugar sculpture while distilling more silver sugar.

If Ann made a sculpture, there wouldn't be enough silver sugar left. She'd be short of the required three barrels.

Jonas had carried that deficient amount of silver sugar into Ann's wagon inside the barrel that he'd claimed was empty. Like this, the very second the sugar sculpture was complete he could steal it and the wagon.

Then Jonas put his plan into action.

He had Kathy lure in the wolves to prevent Shall from chasing after him.

Then he got into Ann's wagon and ran away.

Jonas had obtained the full set: one sugar sculpture and three barrels full of silver sugar.

Lewiston was only half a day's travel away.

During the day, Jonas could probably make it that far even without a guard.

All Ann had left were five barrels full of silver sugar, a new model wagon, and a pair of worn out old horses.

She had enough silver sugar. But the sugar sculpture festival was in two days.

Now that it was nighttime, in actuality there was only one night and one full day left.

There wasn't enough time left to make a sugar sculpture appropriate for a celebration.

*---- I won't make it in time.*

The sugar sculpture festival was held every year. Even if she didn't make it in time this year's festival, there was always next year.

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However, this year was the only chance to send Emma's soul to heaven on Soul Ascension Day.

Emma's sugar sculpture didn't particularly *have to* be made by Ann. Perhaps it would be fine to have a splendid sugar sculpture made for her by a more veteran sugar craftsman.

But Ann wanted to send Emma off with a sugar sculpture she'd made herself.

She wanted to send her beloved mother off with a sugar sculpture she'd made as a silver sugar master.

That was the motivation that had supported her heart after she lost her mother, and given her the strength to keep going.

Having lost that motive, all of Ann's willpower had completely left her body.

She was in shock after being betrayed by Jonas, whom she'd believed was a good person. Furthermore, she felt foolish that she hadn't noticed Jonas's behavior and intent, and that she'd been unable to believe Mythrill Reed Pod, suspecting that he might have eaten the silver sugar. Recalling Mythrill's tear-filled eyes, Ann felt a painful tightness in her chest.

She'd been so naive and foolish to believe in Jonas. Ann was overcome with regret, and anger.

These emotions filled up the empty spaces left by the loss of Ann's willpower, making her whole body feel heavy and sluggish.

She couldn't move a single step.

The wound on the back of her hand where she'd been hit by Jonas's whip throbbed painfully, as if mocking her for her own foolishness.

"If I don't make it in time for this year, it will be meaningless," Ann muttered, setting both hands on the worktable. She hung her head and laughed lightly.

"I must have looked like such an idiot. Enthusiastically making that sugar sculpture..."

When she aimlessly descended from the wagon, a cold rain was falling.

A liquid that smelled like blood had been dumped over her head, and Ann's body and dress were sticky and gave off a vile stench.

Ann couldn't bear her own misery.

Feeling eyes on her, Ann looked around. Shall was underneath a large tree beside the wall of the rest stop. He had his arms crossed and was looking at her with his usual arrogant countenance.

After all, she was a naive little 15 year old girl.

She was all alone, without any power or wisdom of her own nor anyone she could depend on.

Ann was humiliated to have Shall see her in this wretched state. She couldn't bear it. She didn't want him to look.

Violently yanking on the leather string that hung from her neck, Ann pulled out a small bag.

She walked quickly over to Shall and thrust out the bag.

“I'm returning your wing.”

Shall didn't move. Staring fixedly at the bag, he asked, “Lewiston is still a ways ahead. Besides, won't you go after Jonas? Aren't you going to take back your sugar sculpture?”

“Jonas should have arrived in Lewiston by now. He's probably applied to participate in the sugar sculpture festival and handed the sugar sculpture over to the official already. Even if I go now and insist, ‘I made that,’ I don't have any proof. I won't be able to get anyone to pay attention.”

“Are you fine with just leaving it at that?”

“Of course I'm not fine with it... But... But... There's nothing I can do about it! Even if you're here, there's nothing you can do either. So I'm going to set

you free, already. Go wherever you like!”

Ann tossed the words at him, then hung her head.

After a moment, Shall gently took the bag from Ann’s hand.

“So now we’re equals?”

Ann shook her head.

“From the beginning, we’ve always been equals... To the very end, even for the sake of my goals, I was never able to become a true master.”

“When I saw you in the fairy market, somehow I knew that.”

Shall’s words were peaceful. They fell like the sound of steady rain.

“That’s why I told you to buy me. I thought that if it was a naive little girl like you, I’d easily be able to snatch my wing back and run away.”

“You must be happy. Things went exactly as you planned.”

“...I wonder. I’m not sure.”

Shall moved his back away from the trunk of the tree he’d been resting against.

He passed silently in front of Ann, then walked slowly towards the rest stop's iron gate.

*---- I'm all alone now. All alone...*

Something repeated these words over and over again inside her head. A sob slipped from her mouth.

The feelings that she'd been holding back up until now with layer upon layer of restraint began to overflow all at once. She couldn't stop them. The support that had been propping Ann's heart up gave out all at once.

"Mama! Mama! Why did you die?! Why did you leave me alone? You left me all alone. Why... Why?!"

Ann sunk to the ground where she was. She lay her face on her knees and continued to be pelted by the rain.

---

How long had it been since he'd last held his wing in his own hands?

Seventy long years...

No, it felt like it had been even longer than that.

He stared at the small leather bag in his hand.

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While being pelted by the falling rain, Shall Fen Shall reveled in the tranquil atmosphere of the wilderness, unadulterated at the hands of men. The rest stop at his back grew further and further away, step by step.

Further and further... The distance between him and that sweet smelling girl grew greater and greater.

It was strange. Although his freedom was there in his hands, he didn't feel any joy.

When he wondered why that was, he hit upon the reason instantly.

It was because Shall hadn't listened to Ann's orders. Although he himself hadn't realized it at the time, he'd obtained his freedom the moment Ann had bought him. That's why he wasn't overjoyed at this point.

His wing had merely returned from Ann's hands into Shall's.

The only thing that was different since taking back his wing was that he was no longer carting around the baggage called Ann. That sweet girl who had done nothing but preciousy cradle his wing to her breast.

The freedom to go anywhere.

The freedom to do anything.

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He'd obtained absolute freedom, and now found himself unexpectedly questioning himself.

*---- I've obtained my freedom. Now, what do I want to do? Where do I want to go?*

Darkness was pressing in.

"You're about to fall apart," something whispered suddenly in his ear.

*----I won't fall apart. The one who's falling apart is Ann. The thing she was chasing was torn away from her before her very eyes, and now she's all alone.*

"Are you lonely?" that 'something' whispered again, seeming to see straight through him.

*---- Lonely?*

He had nothing and no one he should be protecting, and no where he ought to go.

It was his moment of triumph, when he'd finally obtained the freedom he'd dreamed of for so long, and yet now he was experiencing a sensation like his consciousness was being swallowed up inside of him; cut-off and isolated from the world.

Suddenly he was overcome by a feeling of intense longing.

What he longed for was the memory of something that he'd lost in the far distant past and could never get back, right?

--- *Wrong.*

Memories of the past were empty and fleeting. They only served to chill Shall's heart.

What he longed for was something warmer. Something that he could feel more certainly.

---- *I was feeling it up until just recently. That was...*

A sweet scent. The heat of a warm body.

That sweet scent would probably break down and disappear completely in this cold rain.

The image of a glistening stream of silver sugar falling before his eyes rose up suddenly in Shall's heart. Without thinking, he stopped walking. He found himself wanting to scoop up that falling silver sugar with both hands.

---

Ann's entire body was freezing cold from being continuously pelted by the

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rain. Her tears had run dry.

Even when the rain stopped just before dawn, Ann still couldn't raise her head. She was in a daze.

But, when she felt the warmth and light of the first rays of the morning sun on her back, Ann finally regained her wits.

When she raised her face, the sight of tiny clusters of blue berries growing from the ends of dried grasses met her eyes.

Bathed by the rain and catching the rays of morning sunlight, the berries shined glossily.

That color and shimmer was a stain on her heart, from which absolutely everything had fallen away.

Without thinking about anything, Ann gazed at the berries.

Suddenly, particles of light came welling out from inside the tiny fruits, as if wrapping around the surface of the blue berries. It resembled the light that appeared when Shall materialized his sword. That light gathered at a single point on the berries and gradually began to solidify into a mass the size of Ann's thumb. It began to condense, taking the shape of something.

Ann's eyes widened.

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The particles formed a tiny head, followed by arms and legs. Although it was only the size of her thumb, there was no doubt it was shaped like a human. Two half-transparent wings grew out of its back.

Wrapped in a veil of light, the figure of a tiny, delicate woman appeared. It was a fairy.

“...How beautiful...” Ann whispered without thinking.

The fairy woman sitting perched on top of the blue berries with her legs out to the side looked around nonchalantly, then stretched her back and let out a yawn.

The moment of a fairy’s birth... Ann was enchanted by the solemnity of the moment and the peaceful shimmering light.

She wouldn’t have believed that such a pure light existed in the entire world.

“Fairies are born when something’s energy condenses and takes form.”

Suddenly a voice sounded behind Ann’s back. Ann turned around in surprise.

“Shall...? Why...”

Shall was kneeling down on one knee at Ann’s side.

Ann continued to gaze at the side of Shall's face in astonishment.

Without responding to Ann's question, Shall said with his gaze turned towards the grass berry fairy, "Humans classify fairies according to their usefulness, as either Labor Fairies, Pet Fairies or Warrior Fairies. But we classify ourselves based on what we were born from. Mythrill is a water fairy. I am a noble gem fairy. Since this fairy was born from a grass berry, she's a plant fairy. Her lifespan will probably be about one year. How fleeting... And yet, conversely, I also envy her... My lifespan is too long."

It was said that fairies' appearances didn't change from the time they were born until the time they died. Shall should have been born looking the way he did now. It was also said that a fairy's lifespan was more-or-less the same as that of the item from which it was born.

Shall was born from an obsidian.

In that case, just how long would he continue to live in this world, looking exactly as he did now?



Just trying to imagine it made Ann dizzy. But at the same time, hearing Shall say that he envied a fairy with a fleeting lifespan sent a jolt of pain through her body.

How painful it must be to live almost forever, all alone.

The grass berry fairy seemed to come to her senses at last. She blinked several times. Then she tilted her tiny head.

“Oh... You’re like me. And you, there, you must be a human. It seems I was just born. I’m not even wearing a dress. I apologize for my appearance. In any case, it’s nice to meet you. I’m Ruselle El Min. Oh, look at that. It seems I know my own name.”

Surprising herself, the tiny, tiny fairy flapped her wings and flew upwards.

“You will know the things that the grass berry from which you were born knew. That’s all. The reverberations of the energy that that grass berry gave off transformed into sound, creating your name.”

“Really? In any case, first I want a dress. Like that lady.”

Shall gently extended his hand and let the tiny fairy climb onto it.

“Ruselle El Min, don’t wish for dresses and such things. Don’t approach humans, wishing to have the things that they have.”

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“Why not?”

“Humans are dangerous. They capture fairies and use them as slaves. They steal freedom from fairies.”

“Really? But what about that lady over there? She’s a human, isn’t she?”

“She’s special. Now, go, Ruselle El Min. Even further into the wilderness. Go somewhere the hands of humans haven’t reached, and live as you like.”

“You’re very kind. Thank you.”

Expressing her gratitude, the fairy unhurriedly beat her wings and flew out of the rest stop.

After seeing the tiny fairy off, Shall finally turned his gaze towards Ann.

Ann was shocked, and merely stared at him, unable to avert her eyes. Shall knit his brows.

“What is it? That strange expression on your face...”

“It’s just... Why are you here? I gave your wing back to you, didn’t I?”

“You didn’t fulfill your promise. I came to get you to fulfill it.”



“Promise?”

“You promised that you’d give me a sugar sculpture.”

“A sugar sculpture...?”

He was saying that he’d come back for a sugar sculpture?

*---- I’m all alone. So very alone...*

The voice echoing inside her head grew faint.

*---- That can’t be true. Nobody would come all the way back just for one sugar sculpture.*

“Are you going to make it or not?”

Looking at Shall as he demanded this irritably, Ann laughed bitterly.

*---- Either that, or maybe Shall really, really wanted a sugar sculpture? I don’t care which it is.*

For this moment, at least, she was not alone. Someone was there with her.

That made her happy, and a smile overflowed onto her face.

Her dream of becoming a silver sugar master this year and sending Emma off to heaven had disappeared, and a gaping hole had opened up in her heart.

But Shall had come back. Even though he was under no obligation or orders, he'd come back.

If there was something she could do for him in return, perhaps that would prove her worth.

In her chest, which had become hollow and empty, a single spark began to burn.

She was happy. More than anything. Ann felt tears brimming in her eyes, about to spill over, but she held them back and smiled.

“That’s right. I did promise. I’ll make you something unbelievably beautiful.”  
Ann stood up. If it was silver sugar she needed, there was plenty of it in the wagon Jonas had left behind.

“Wait. You can’t handle silver sugar in that state.”

As he said this, Shall dumped a dry cloth and a set of men’s clothing on Ann’s head.

Accepting the clothing, Ann tilted her head.

“Where did this come from?”

“It was inside the wagon. That guy left it behind. I don’t think he’ll mind if you use it.”

Ann laughed wryly.

“That’s true.”

Ann changed her clothes in the shade behind the wagon.

The men’s trousers and shirt were baggy on her and she had to roll up the sleeves and cuffs of the pants several times.

“My hands are too cold. I wonder if they’ll work.”

Ann was cold. Rubbing her chilled body, she wiggled her stiff fingers and headed for the door to Jonas’s wagon.

At this, Shall walked up to Ann nonchalantly. He gripped both of her hands in his. Then he blew his breath onto her hands.

“Shall...?”

Ann trembled under the warmth of his breath.

“When I give you the sugar sculpture, you’ll leave again?”

The moment she asked the question she’d been unable to hold back, Ann was gently enfolded in a pleasant warmth.

She realized Shall was gently embracing her close to his body.

“You smell so sweet.”

Shall’s breath tickled her ear.

“Your scent called to me. Make the sugar sculpture. There’s still something you can do.”

Ann’s pulse increased in speed exponentially.

Shall released her, and she climbed into the wagon.

*---- For some reason my ears are really hot.*

Hot joy welled up from deep inside her chest.

Even if Shall did leave again once she gave him the sugar sculpture, the fact remained that he had come back like this in order to encourage her. She had to believe that that was enough.

For his sake, she would make an astonishingly beautiful sugar sculpture.

Scooping up some silver sugar, she added cold water to it.

Without even thinking about what she would make, Ann began to knead the silver sugar, seeking only to silence the rapid beating of her heart. Her fingertips moved of their own accord.

Only the thought that she wanted to make *something* was overflowing from deep inside her chest.

What came to mind was the instant of the fairy's birth that she'd witnessed earlier. She wanted to memorialize that beauty in silver sugar. It didn't have to be large. She'd make the sculpture small enough to fit in the palm of her hand, and so delicate that it appeared as if would break at any moment. It would have slender wings and glossy berries. She'd capture the fairy's fluffy hair and slender limbs.

At some point, Ann had gotten completely absorbed in her work.

She rolled the silver sugar thinner and thinner, so thin that it was transparent, then she engraved a detailed pattern.

Ann stubbornly kneaded the silver sugar over and over again to recreate the glossy grass berries.

By the time Ann's hands finally stopped moving, the rays of light that came slashing into the wagon had become slanted and deep orange. The sun was beginning to set.

Ann was surprised with herself that she'd worked continuously from dawn until dusk. Furthermore, she was surprised that the completed sugar sculpture was so little it could sit in the palm of her hand.

She herself was astounded that she could have spent such a long time working on such a tiny sculpture.

However the figure of the fairy born from the grass berries was an exact replica of the one Ann had seen that morning.

The sculpture caught the eye, and didn't let go. It was that magnetic.

Ann was surprised to find that there was something similar between this sugar sculpture and the ones Emma had made.

The sugar sculpture Ann had made for the sugar sculpture festival had been an outstanding, impressive piece. But that was Emma's design. It was something Emma had designed because she believed from the bottom of her heart that it was beautiful.

It wasn't something that Ann had poured her feelings into.

The sugar sculpture that Ann had made using Emma's design was not at its essence truly Ann's sculpture.

---- *That's why he said "monkey see, monkey do"...*

Something that she thought was truly beautiful... The feelings of wanting to capture that in silver sugar... Once she had these, she was finally able to create a sugar sculpture that she was satisfied with, and that had the power to draw people in.

From this vantage point, you could say that this was without a doubt the ultimate sugar sculpture that Ann was capable of making at this point.

"This isn't an imitation... It's *my* sugar sculpture."

She'd put all of her gratitude to Shall for accompanying her this far into this sculpture sculpture. She would give it to him.

Carrying the sugar sculpture carefully in both hands, Ann descended from the wagon.

Shall was sitting on a rock, gazing absent-mindedly at the setting sun, but he turned around when he sensed Ann's presence.

"Shall. Here. It's your sugar sculpture, as promised. It's the best sugar sculpture I am capable of making right now. Compared to the one that was

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stolen by Jonas it's incredibly small, but... That one was half mama's sugar sculpture. This one really is my creation."

Ann knelt in front of Shall and extended the sugar sculpture out towards him.

Looking at the tiny sugar sculpture, Shall said, "...It's beautiful."

At his words, Ann's cheeks stained with color.

She was even happier than if he had praised her own appearance. She was so happy that she wanted to cry.

"Thank you. Will you accept it?"

Shall gently, carefully took the sugar sculpture in both hands.

*---- With this, Shall too may go away somewhere.*

At this thought, the fairy in front of her seemed more precious than anything.

If this was the end, she wanted to touch his wing, which even now was shimmering beautifully, reflecting the light of the setting sun.

"Your wing... Can touch it?"

There should be no way that he would easily let her touch something that was



as dear to him as his own life. If Ann were harboring malicious intent towards him, it was possible she would try to harm Shall's wing.

She knew this, and yet she couldn't help but ask.

But Shall nodded.

“Touch it.”

“It's really okay?”

After confirming that he'd nodded once more, Ann gently took Shall's wing in both hands.

The wing was faintly warm. Ann let it slide across her palms, suppressing a shudder as she felt it's texture, softer than the finest silk. Then she gently kissed the wing.

Shall shuddered almost imperceptibly, and raised his chin slightly, narrowing his eyes. He breathed in sharply.

“Thank you.”

“Satisfied?”

“Yes. So...”

*It's fine if you leave.* She tried to say the words, but they got stuck in her throat.

For a moment, Shall gazed at the sugar sculpture in his hands. Then he asked hesitantly, “This sugar sculpture belongs to me, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll have you do what I want done with it.”

After he’d said this, Shall stood up. Then he unfastened the horses’ reins from the tree where they were tied up, and began hooking them up to the remaining wagon.

Returning to where Ann stood with her head tilted in confusion, Shall jerked his chin towards the wagon.

“Get on the driver’s seat. We’re leaving.”

“Where are we going?”

“To Lewiston. If we run through the night, we’ll arrive in Lewiston in the morning. Even if we slide into town at the last minute on the day of the sugar sculpture festival, we’ll make it in time, right? You said you wanted to become a silver sugar master this year, didn’t you?”

“But, Shall... The sugar sculpture was--”

“We have this.”

Shall thrust the sugar sculpture in his hands out towards Ann.

Urged by his expression to take it, Ann once again took the sugar sculpture in her own hands.

“If this really is an example of your true full potential, enter it in the festival. If it still proves to be no use, you can give up then.”

All of the sugar sculptures entered into the sugar sculpture festival were large and impressive. Among such competitors, no one would take notice of a tiny sculpture like this, and she would surely lose.

However... Ann finally realized.

Why had she been so frantic about wanting to become a silver sugar master? Emma wouldn't have been happy for her if she'd won not because her abilities were sufficient but because she'd borrowed Emma's strength. Emma wouldn't be able to happily go to heaven if she were sent off with the sugar sculpture of a fake silver sugar master like that.

If this tiny sugar sculpture really did represent her true abilities, then she should use it to compete. She looked up at Shall.

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“Why are you doing this for me? I already returned your wing to you.”

“You returned my wing. You’re no longer my master. So now we can be friends. If that’s what you want.”

“Is that what you want, Shall?”

At Ann’s question, Shall shrugged his shoulders.

“Sure, whatever.”

Ann understood the hidden meaning behind his nonchalant words.

The original strong glimmer returned to Ann’s eyes. Joy welled up inside of her, filling her with strength.

“It’s going to be night soon. Can we make it the rest of the way off the bloody highway? Will we be okay?”

Shall laughed daringly.

“Just who do you take me for?”

Striking out through the darkness, Ann’s horses struggled on. Even though their breathing was heavy and ragged, they never stopped moving. Together with the break of day, the wagon finally pulled off of the bloody highway.

Then, by the time the morning dew had dried, the imperial city of Lewiston spread out before them.

Chapter 6 - END



AQUA Scans & Icarus Bride presents:

# Sugar Apple Fairy Tale vol. 1

*“The Silver Sugar Master and the Black Fairy”*

Story by Mikawa Miri

Illustrations by Aki

Scans: Mizuouji

Translation: Icarus Bride

Proofread: Icarus Bride & Mizuouji

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## **Chapter 7. The Path of the Royal Medal**

On top of a low hill surrounded by a moat sat the enormous royal castle.

As if to gather eyes to the royals that dwelled within, the city streets extended out from the castle in a radiating pattern. Buildings constructed from stone filled every inch of space between the streets.

The eight giant avenues leading to the royal castle were paved, spread with stones.

The sugar sculpture festival was held on one of these eight streets, the widest of them all, which led to the main gate of the royal castle: the Boulevard of Triumphant Return. In the plaza located directly in front of the castle gate a tent was pitched, and underneath it chairs were arranged on a raised platform. These were the seats for the members of the royal family who would attend the festival.

The people of the imperial city loved festivals.

For no other reason than to catch a glimpse of the royal family, the citizens had flocked to the plaza.

Closest to the gazes of the onlookers sat the King and Queen in the seats reserved for the royal family. Behind them were the royal princes and princesses. Their dazzling vestments and regal appearance took Ann's breath away.

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In front of the royal family's chairs, a number of tables draped with white tablecloths were lined up side-by-side. On top of these tables, sugar sculptures as big as a person's arms' width were placed in a row.

All of them should be richly colored and display fine workmanship.

However, at the moment, all of the sugar sculptures were covered with cloth, so it was impossible to see what was underneath. In front of each sugar sculpture stood the craftsman who'd made it. Because they were appearing in front of the king, everyone was decked out in their finest clothing.

Jonas was there as well, wearing a splendid fur vest.

The sugar sculpture festival was presided over by Earl Downing. He was an elderly man who'd displayed an uncommon shrewdness as the Minister of the Interior during the reign of the previous king. He'd retired from that post already, but even so he was an old retainer who enjoyed the trust of the current king as well.

The retainer confirmed that the sugar craftsmen were all lined up, and that the royal family were all in their seats.

Earl Downing had just stood up to say the opening proclamation which would begin the examination of the sugar sculptures.

Suddenly, there was a great commotion in one part of the audience.

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The sight that reached the old retainer's eyes as he glanced up with brows furrowed to see what was going on was that of a box-shaped wagon charging through the crowd.

“Watch out!!”

“Stop that wagon!!”

As the guards charged the wagon, the slender girl driving it yanked on the reins, bringing the wagon to a halt. Then she jumped down from the driver's seat and ran into the plaza, slipping through the guards' outstretched arms.

A black-haired young man followed behind her, as if protecting her.

The girl was headed for the tent where Earl Downing stood.

“Catch her!!”

One of the guards grabbed the girl's arm. However, the black-haired young man protecting her knelt the guard in the stomach several times. The guard went flying backwards.

To the girl whose arm had been released, he shouted, “Go!”

She was already running.

The young man stood between the girl and the guards brandishing spears, preventing them from chasing after her.

That's when the onlookers finally noticed the single, beautiful wing on the young man's back.

“I won't let you lay a hand on that girl!”

“You're... a fairy?!”

The girl who was running full-speed towards the tent where Earl Downing stood tripped just as she reached it. She lost her balance and pitched forward, falling to the ground.

Even so, she raised her head and shouted desperately between pants, “I've observed that the sugar sculpture festival's opening proclamation has yet to be made. In that case, it should still be possible to enter. I would like to participate in the competition. I am a sugar craftswoman. My name is Ann Halford. I don't have a hometown to declare.”

The guards who came pouring out of the tent pinned Ann down where she'd fallen and shouted, “You've got a lot of nerve!!”

From behind Earl Downing, who watched this entire exchange with wide eyes, came a cheerful, laughing voice.

“My, my, just when I’d thought that you wouldn’t come, what a flashy entrance!! You’re an endless source of amusement, Ann!”

Ann’s eyes opened wide in recognition of the familiar voice.

Behind Earl Downing stood the figure of a young nobleman. He wore formal clothing adorned with silver embroidery. This was without doubt the costume of the Silver Sugar Viscount.

The person wearing it was a familiar-looking man with wild brown eyes.

“Hugh?!”

“Mercury. You know this girl?” Earl Downing asked Hugh.

---- *Mercury?*

Ann couldn’t take her eyes off of Hugh’s face.

---- *Hugh Mercury?! The leader of the Mercury guild, and the current Silver Sugar Viscount?!*

“Yes. That girl is, as she says, a simple sugar craftswoman. There’s no need to worry. That fairy over there is this girl’s bodyguard.”

At this, Earl Downing turned to the guards brandishing spears and raised his

hand.

“Stand down, all of you. This girl is a potential participant.”

The guards surrounding Shall and the guards pinning Ann down obeyed his order, and stepped back.

Ann got up and knelt where she was.

Earl Downing turned his gaze to Ann and said, “I can tell just by looking that you’re quite young. Yet in spite of your youth, you’ve announced your intent to participate in the competition. You must be quite sure of yourself. Who was your teacher?”

“My mother. My mother was a silver sugar master.”

“I see. Then your petition to participate is in accordance with the guidelines. However, you do realize that there is a procedure that must be followed in order to apply?”

“Yes. I must announce my intention to participate to Earl Downing, and then the Silver Sugar Viscount will have me perform a simple demonstration in order to verify whether or not I am a craftswoman whose skill is fit to appear before his majesty the king. If I receive his approval, I will be allowed to participate.”

“That is correct. Those procedures were completed yesterday. Furthermore, his majesty the king is already seated, and the sugar sculpture festival is about to begin. There isn’t time to test your ability now.”

“I will complete the assignment as quickly as possible. Please!”

Seemingly moved by Ann’s desperation, Earl Downing turned to Hugh as if to consult with him.

“What should we do, Mercury?”

“There isn’t time to have her complete the assignment now.”

Turned down flat. Ann chewed her lip and hung her head.

But Hugh continued on, grinning wickedly.

“However, Earl Downing. In a fortunate turn of events, I had the opportunity to test this girl’s skill the other day. I believe she is fit to appear before his majesty the king.”

At these words, Ann raised her head. When their eyes met, Hugh winked.

Earl Downing nodded.

“Very well. If the Silver Sugar Viscount has acknowledged you, I will allow

you to participate.”

Then he pointed to the table where the sugar sculptures were lined up.

“Have the guards carry your three barrels of silver sugar to the edge of the plaza. Then add the sculpture you made to the others, stand behind it, and await the judgement of the royal family.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you very much.”

Ann rose to her feet, bowed curtly, then brushed the dust off her clothes.

The curious gazes of both audience and festival participants alike were all fixed on Ann, who stood in the center of the plaza.

All of the sugar craftsmen participating in the sugar sculpture festival were decked out in their finest clothes.

When it came to Ann, however, she was wearing baggy, ill-fitting men’s clothing and her face and hair were both filthy. Her slender body appeared excessively scrawny, and she looked far younger than her age. Furthermore, she was accompanied by the most beautiful fairy any of them had ever seen.

*Who on Earth is she?* their eyes inquired, shining with curiosity.

Incidentally, the position where Ann was ordered to line up was right next to

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Jonas.

Jonas watched the entire scene unfold with a tense expression on his face.

When Ann came to stand beside him, he put up a front of false bravado and laughed scornfully.

“My, my, Ann. My clothes suit you surprisingly well. In any case, do you even have a sugar sculpture?”

Ann glared at Jonas spitefully.

“You have my thanks. These clothes came in handy. And you needn’t worry for my sake; I have a sugar sculpture.”

“Then quickly line it up on the table. Where is it?”

“Here.”

Ann took a step forward and placed a small, cloth-covered mass on the white table.

Bursts of laughter leaked out from among the onlookers and other sugar craftsman who witnessed this.

Jonas, too, snorted derisively.

“Well, I suppose that’s the best you could have done with the time you had. I’m impressed with your nerve, Ann, for competing with that sugar sculpture the size of a child’s toy.”

Looking straight forward at the royal family’s tent, Ann replied, “I’m impressed with you, too, Jonas, for entering a sculpture that someone else made. You’d think that there would be a limit even to your shamelessness, but apparently not.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“The Silver Sugar Viscount. Do you honestly think you can deceive Hugh? You should already know how sharp his eyes are from that night at the doctor’s inn.”

Jonas’s expression faltered just a bit. But then he sneered and said with a laugh, “I was surprised to learn that Hugh was the Silver Sugar Viscount when I applied to participate in the festival. He just became Silver Sugar Viscount half a year ago. I bet he was just acting haughty that night at the doctor’s inn because he’s a newly-appointed Silver Sugar Viscount. This time, when he saw **my** sugar sculpture, he didn’t say anything.”

“There’s no way he doesn’t know.”

“I wonder.”



Seeing that Ann had placed her sugar sculpture in line with the others, Earl Downing raised his hand and proclaimed, “Let the sugar sculpture festival commence. I vow that the honor of the title of Silver Sugar Master will be awarded to the most outstanding sugar craftsman in the kingdom.”

The official in charge of overseeing the competition signaled to the sugar craftsmen.

“Craftsmen. Present your sculptures to his majesty the king.”

As these words were spoken, each of the sugar craftsmen removed the cloth covering their sugar sculpture.

The onlookers let out a collective gasp at the sight of the gorgeous sugar sculptures on display.

The king rested his weight on the armrest of his chair and gazed sweepingly from left to right, not appearing to be particularly interested.

Then the king’s gaze stopped. He stood up.

His gaze was focused in Ann and Jonas’s direction.

*---- Could it be, my sculpture caught his eye?!*

Ann’s pulse sped up.

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The king gestured to Earl Downing, then whispered something into his ear.

Earl Downing nodded then turned to Ann and Jonas.

“The two craftsmen over there; Jonas Anders and Ann Halford. Bring your sugar sculptures with you; you may approach his majesty the king.”

Ann and Jonas’s eyes met.

The onlookers tilted their heads and began to whisper to each other.

“That large, splendid one is appropriate. Its workmanship is far better than any of the others. But why has his majesty ordered that a tiny sugar sculpture like *that* be brought before him?”

“Well, we can’t see it very well from here.”

Jonas got the guards to assist him in carrying his sugar sculpture up onto the dais where the king waited. Then he knelt, his face stiff with nervousness.

Ann nodded to Shall, who stood behind her.

“I’ll be back.”

Shall nodded in return.

Ann gently picked up the sugar sculpture, wrapping her hands around it, and approached the king. Placing the sugar sculpture on a table set up on the dais,

she knelt as well.

The king rose smoothly and peered down at the sugar sculptures on the table.

“It’s strange. Come here and take a look, Mercury,” the king called to the Silver Sugar Viscount in a low voice.

Appearing at the king’s side as summoned, Hugh nodded.

“The nuances of these two sculptures are so similar, it’s as if they were both made by the hand of the same sugar craftsman.”

At these words, Jonas flinched back in shock. Hugh’s eyes lit up.

“Which sculpture do you prefer, your majesty?”

The king’s eyes narrowed in response to Hugh’s question. He gazed at the tiny fairy.



“I like this one better. It looks ethereal. As if it’s about to break at any moment. It’s full of life. I’ve never seen such a beautiful sugar sculpture.”

“Yes.”

“I think it’s the best. What do you think? I think the sugar craftsman who created this is fit to be a silver sugar master.”

Although she kept her face down-turned, Ann’s pulse was racing, whispering  
“Can it be? Can it be?”

However...

“That sugar sculpture is indeed magnificent, your majesty. But...”

The regal voice of the queen resounded from behind the king.

“But, your majesty, the task at hand was to create a large, spectacular sugar sculpture that could serve as the focal point for a celebration. I am uncertain whether the sugar craftsman who made this small sculpture also possesses the ability to make a larger one. I feel that it might be best if you thought about what qualities are necessary for silver sugar master.”

“That is true...”

There was a moment of silence. Ann’s pulse increased in speed.

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“It’s decided,” the king declared.

“I’ve chosen. This sugar craftsman is fit to be named a silver sugar master. What is his name?”

Earl Downing replied, “His name is Jonas Anders.”

“Very well. I hereby decree: I award the royal medal to the sugar sculpture presented by Jonas Anders. The creator of this sugar sculpture will be this year’s silver sugar master.”

The crowd went wild.

Sensing Jonas raise his head beside her, Ann’s whole body slumped.

*---- I should have known.*

“Ann Halford, you are dismissed. Jonas Anders, you are to remain here. Guards, bring the three barrels of silver sugar that Anders distilled to me. Those three barrels of silver sugar will be presented for the king’s inspection, after which the three barrels and your sugar sculpture will become a gift to the royal family.”

“Yes sir.”

Jonas’s cheeks flushed red with excitement, and his chest puffed out with

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pride.

Stealing a sideways glance at Jonas, Ann bowed once to the royal family and picked up her sugar sculpture.

Jonas's three barrels of silver sugar were brought before the king.

Just as Ann turned to leave...

“Wh-what?! What is this?!” Jonas shrieked in a manner not appropriate in the presence of the king.

Without thinking, Ann turned back around.

Something leapt forcefully out of one of the barrels that been carried onto the dais and placed in front of Jonas. At the sight of it, the king, Earl Downing and Jonas all widened their eyes.

What had jumped out of the barrel was a fairy the size of the palm of a human's hand. The fairy had silver hair and blue eyes. It was Mythrill Reed Pod.

Ann sucked in a breath.

“What is the meaning of this, Anders?!” Earl Downing, having recovered from his shock, shouted after peering into the barrel Mythrill had jumped out

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of.

“One of these barrels is completely empty!”

“Th-that’s ridiculous--”

In contrast with Jonas, who was flustered and confused, Mythrill prostrated himself at the king’s feet.

“Ahhhhhhh!! Forgive me, your most noble highness!! I am a worthless labor fairy employed by Master Jonas Anders. My master totally sucks at distilling silver sugar, and when he made the sugar sculpture for the competition, he was short of the required three barrels. So, since I have the ability to perform minor optical illusions, he ordered me to make the barrel appear full. I was put inside the barrel and brought here. But I was too afraid to deceive you, your most noble, most majestic highness, and couldn’t carry through with it!!”

With intensely exaggerated movements, Mythrill twisted his body pathetically and broke into hysterical sobs. He even pulled out a tiny handkerchief that he must have prepared somewhere and buried his face in it, wailing dramatically.

Ann was dumbfounded.

---- *Why is Mythrill here? What is he doing?!*

Then she realized.

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As he cried and carried on, Mythrill's stomach was protruding so far that it looked like it was about to burst.

*---- Don't tell me, Mythrill... He ate an entire barrel of silver sugar?!*

Ann couldn't figure out what Mythrill was doing inside the barrel of silver sugar that Jonas had brought with him.

However, she could think of only one reason for the charade he was carrying on.

He was doing it for Ann's sake.

He was trying to do something to help Ann, whose sugar sculpture had been stolen.

Jonas stood up and, seemingly having forgotten that he was in the presence of the king, and shouted, "This is a conspiracy!! It's that sugar craftswoman, Ann Halford! She's the one using this labor fairy. The Silver Sugar Viscount should also be able to verify this!! She and I are acquaintances. She's obsessed with becoming a silver sugar master and has been trying to thwart me at every turn! This has got to be part of her plan, too!"

Jonas roughly grabbed Ann's arm as she stared at him wordlessly, astounded by his absurd claims.

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“Come here, you coward!!”

“Ow!!”

Seeing Ann let out a cry of pain, Mythrill’s face changed color and he leapt up suddenly.

“Who are you calling a coward?! Let go of Ann, you bastard!!” Mythrill shouted indignantly, completely giving up on pretending to cry.

At this, Jonas pointed a finger at Mythrill with a look of smug victory on his face.

“Just look at that!! This woman and this fairy have been in on it together since the beginning! Before anything else, we should kill this insolent fairy.”

“I won’t let you do something like that!”

Infuriated by Jonas’s words, Ann shook her arm free of his grasp.

Then she turned to face the royal family’s tent.

Jonas saying that Mythrill should be killed had been the last straw; Ann couldn’t bear to stand by silently watching his acts of cowardice any longer.

“It’s true that this fairy is a friend of mine. It’s also true that he did all of this

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for my sake. But there is a good reason. The sugar sculpture that this person, Jonas Anders, entered into the competition as his own was made by me. He stole my sugar sculpture. This fairy was only trying to stop Jonas from using a stolen sugar sculpture to become a silver sugar master.”

“That’s a lie! I never stole anything!”

“You’re going to continue to lie, even when it’s come to this?!”

“Shut up!! You’re the liar here!”

Ann and Jonas glared at each other intensely.

The onlookers, the king, and Earl Downing; everyone present was shocked and bewildered by Ann and Jonas’s words.

Which of them was the liar?

Only Hugh had an amused smile playing on his lips.

“Well then, shall we determine the truth of this matter, your majesty?” Hugh said to the king, who was looking at Ann and Jonas with his face twisted in confusion.

“We don’t know which of these sugar craftsmen made this sugar sculpture. Whoever made it is this year’s silver sugar master, correct? In that case, let us

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test and see who made it.”

“Hmm. Is there really a way to determine who made it? Mercury, if there exists a way, go ahead and let’s see.”

“Yes, your majesty.”

Hugh turned to a man standing beside him who appeared to be his servant, and gave him an order. Then, leaving the king’s tent, he approached Ann and Jonas.

“I’m going to have you do the same thing as that night at the doctor’s inn. The only difference is that this time you will have an assignment.”

A small table was carried out and placed before the king. Two types of vessels filled with cold water and the spatulas, rulers, and rolling pins of various sizes that were necessary for making sugar sculptures were quickly laid out on top of the table.

“This is the sugar sculpture that his majesty the king has chosen. It has little butterflies on it, right? These ones that are attached to the flowers. You will make one of these right now, before his majesty’s eyes. If we compare the characteristics of the butterflies you make now to the ones on this sculpture, we’ll know who made it.”

“Understood. I’ll do it.”

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This was just what she was hoping for. Ann nodded immediately, but Jonas went pale.

“What do you say, Jonas?”

When asked directly, Jonas nodded reluctantly.

Ann and Jonas lined up in front of the table.

From all around them, the curious gazes of the audience were focused on them. From directly in front of them, the members of the royal family regarded them with regal, subdued expressions.

Focusing on the silver sugar in front of her, Ann closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

Suddenly, Ann felt a hot gaze on her back. Somehow, she knew that it was Shall's gaze.

*---- I'll make the butterfly. An unbelievably beautiful butterfly that will make Shall happy.*

“Begin!”

Simultaneous with Hugh's command, Ann opened her eyes. She added cold water to the silver sugar.

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Ann began to knead the silver sugar to add glossiness to the dough.

*---- I'll knead it even more. I want lustrous wings. That's right, I want to make beautiful wings, just like Shall's.*

As soon as her hands touched the silver sugar, the clumsy noises that Jonas was making beside her mysteriously faded from her consciousness.

Sweat was welling up on Jonas's forehead. He clicked his tongue now and again.

Ann's fingertips glided over the silver sugar.

*---- Even more beautiful...*

Shall was watching. With just that, Ann felt a tremendous sense of peace and calm come over her. Because of this, she was able to lose herself completely in her work.

“That's enough.”

Ann snapped back to her senses at the sound of Hugh's voice.

Raising her head, Ann found that at some point Hugh had come to stand in front of her. And standing next to him was the king, who'd come down from his tent.

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The king was staring fixedly at Ann and Jonas's hands.

Jonas's hands were trembling, and suddenly he sank to the ground right where he was.

“Anders's butterfly is not even worth mentioning,” Hugh observed.

The sugar sculpture that Jonas had been crafting up until now was formed into the rough shape of a butterfly.

However, that butterfly clearly did not give the impression that it was about to come to life and fly away at any minute. It was obviously of inferior workmanship than those on the sugar sculpture the king had chosen.

Next, Hugh looked at Ann's hands.

“Halford's butterfly... It resembles those on the sculpture that your majesty selected. But, it's somehow different.”

Ann looked at her own hands.

Cradled between them was a beautiful butterfly.

The wings were glossy and looked as if they were going to start beating at any moment. Although it was an uncolored white butterfly, its wings appeared rainbow-colored as they reflected the light of the sun.

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The king furrowed his brows.

“What is going on here, Mercury?”

Shrugging his shoulders, Hugh laughed.

“I don’t know. I wonder which of them created the sugar sculpture that your majesty selected.”

The king looked at the butterflies Ann and Jonas had made, comparing them.

“It seems clear to me which of them made the sugar sculpture I chose...”

“Then, between the butterfly that Halford made just now and the ones on the sculpture you chose, which does your majesty prefer?”

“Obviously Halford’s butterfly. Even more than the ones on the sculpture I selected, it’s... It’s...”

Suddenly, the king made a shocked face, as if he’d just realized something. Then he smiled.

“I see. So that’s what you mean; they really aren’t the same.”

“Yes. So I can’t say definitively which of them made that sculpture.”



At these words, Jonas cut in, seemingly trying to grasp at what he saw as his final chance.

“I-- I can’t do my best work unless I’m working alone, in a quiet place!! If I were allowed to take my time and work alone in a quiet place, I would be able to replicate the sugar sculpture that his majesty chose. Honestly. I swear, it’s true.”

If it were proven here and now that Jonas had submit someone else’s sugar sculpture as his own, it would mean that he’d tried to deceive the king. There would be serious consequences. He might even lose his head.

“You’re painful to watch, Jonas.”

At Hugh’s words, Jonas’s voice hitched up even higher in pitch.

“But I’m not lying!! There’s no proof that I’m lying!!”

“You say that you’re not lying?” the king asked quietly.

At the gravity echoing in his voice, the entire square fell completely silent.

Trembling, Jonas prostrated himself on the ground at the king’s feet.

“I swear to God, I am not lying.”

Next, the king looked at Ann.

“You aren’t lying, are you, Halford?”

“No, sir.”

Ann continued to meet the king’s eyes without hesitation. At this, the king gave her a kind smile.

“If neither of you is lying, I don’t know what to make of this. I can not deliver punishment to the guilty without proof. Nor can I bestow glory. Downing!!”

“Yes!”

The old retainer appeared at the king’s side immediately.

“It seems that this year there is no one suitable to be made a silver sugar master. We’re done here.”

The king turned around brusquely. Then, without even glancing at the bewildered ministers of state and members of the royal family, he walked leisurely out of the tent.

The onlookers turned to one another.

“What’s going on?”

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“There won’t be a royal medal awarded this year?”

“Won’t they choose one of the other sugar sculptures?”

“But, the king has already left...”

“He won’t change his mind.”

The king had chosen a sugar sculpture. Then he’d departed.

However, it hadn’t been determined who’d made that sugar sculpture.

This was an unprecedented occurrence.

At this year’s sugar sculpture festival, no one was chosen to become a silver sugar master.

Wearing an expression of disbelief at the king’s decision, the queen rose as well. Then, glancing briefly at Ann, who stood motionless with shock, the queen called Earl Downing over to her and, after telling him something, she departed as well.

The sugar craftsmen were agitated, looking at each other in confusion, but once they realized that the king did not seem inclined to resume the competition they gave up and began preparing to leave.

The audience began to disperse as well, all the while complaining noisily.

Earl Downing slowly made his way to Ann's side.

“Ann Halford. I have a message for you from the queen.”

Ann turned to him, eyes wide with surprise, and Earl Downing relayed solemnly, “Her majesty requests that you return next year with a sugar sculpture suitable for a celebration. She says that she is looking forward to it.”

Understanding the meaning of these words, Ann felt joy spread throughout her chest. Her cheeks flushed.

“Yes. ...Yes! Without a doubt. I will certainly come.”

“By the way, Halford. If you don't already have plans to sell that fairy sculpture, might you sell it to me? My granddaughter will be getting married soon, and I've been looking for a splendid sugar sculpture for the occasion. What do you say to 600 cres?”

600 cres. Six gold coins. It was such a large sum of money that just the thought of it made her dizzy. With that much money, she could buy a new wagon and two horses to go with it. For just a moment, the giant sum of money made her hesitate. But finally, Ann shook her head.

“I'm very sorry, Earl Downing. I've already promised I'd give it to someone

else.”

“I’ll pay 600 cres for it...”

“...I’m sorry.”

“I see. Well, it’s unfortunate, but I suppose you couldn’t have made a sugar sculpture like that if you weren’t at least a bit unusual, after all. By the way, Mercury. I’m leaving Anders to you. Deal with him appropriately, as Silver Sugar Viscount.”

“Leave it to me, Earl.”

Hugh bowed exaggeratedly.

“Well then. I’ll see you next year, Halford.”

With a final, gentle smile, Earl Downing turned and walked away.

Hand on hip, Hugh looked down at Ann and Jonas, who remained in the center of the commotion.

“Now, then. Ann. Things have become quite a mess. What should I do? It’s been left completely to me to deal with Jonas as I see fit,” Hugh said in a casual tone of voice.

“Do you have anything you want to say to Jonas? Is there something you’d like me to do? I’m not as nice as his majesty the king, you see. I’m fine with sending a mere sugar craftsman’s head rolling.”

Jonas, who was still collapsed on the ground, twitched in surprise. Without looking up, he began to tremble.

At some point, Salim had come up behind Hugh. He was looking at Jonas with the eyes of a predator, staring down his prey.

Ann shook her head.

“Hugh... Silver Sugar Viscount-sama, I’m grateful to you for supporting my application to participate this year.”

“Hey, hey, hey, don’t lay it on so thick. ‘Hugh’ is fine.”

Hugh gave her a light smack to the back of her head, and Ann shrugged her shoulders sheepishly.

“I’m really grateful, Hugh. Thank you. About Jonas, it’s fine. There’s nothing I want to say to him. There’s nothing I want to say, but...”

Based on his thoroughly defeated looking appearance, Jonas seemed to have received more than sufficient punishment for his foolish actions. Furthermore, no matter what she said now it wouldn’t change anything.

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She had nothing she wanted to say to him. However, her chest was full of pent up emotions.

“Stand up, Jonas,” Ann urged quietly, but Jonas didn’t move.

“Stand up.”

When she said it again, Jonas stood up shakily, never raising his face.

Ann grabbed him by the lapels of his shirt.

“Jonas!! Look at me!!”

The moment Jonas’s head snapped up, the palm of Ann’s hand met with the side of his face.

Jonas drew back reflexively, and Ann let him go. Then she smiled cheerfully.

“Ahh, that felt good! I really wanted to give a good smack! That’s good enough.”

“An appropriate punishment!”

Hugh let out a loud, heartfelt laugh. Behind him, Salim chuckled as well.

“Alright, then, we’re done here!!”

At Hugh's words, Ann bowed briskly to him. Hugh grinned and nodded to her in return. Then the two of them simultaneously set off in separate directions.

Jonas remained behind, standing frozen where he was, his hand pressed against the cheek that had been slapped.

Kathy came running up to Jonas. She gently grabbed onto the hem of his pants.

---

Ann searched throughout the square milling with people for a familiar pair of black eyes.

A short ways away, she spotted Shall looking towards her.

With the sugar sculpture clutched in her hands, she slowly approached him.

“Thanks, Shall. I wasn’t able to become a silver sugar master this year. But I’ll come here again next year. It won’t be in time to send mama off to heaven, but... But, I’m sure mama will be able to make do with a sugar sculpture that I’ve put my whole heart into, even if I’m not a silver sugar master.”

Even though she’d been so insistent on becoming a silver sugar master this year, now those feelings were so dim it was as if they’d been bleached away.

That had been nothing more than her clinging to the desire to “send mama off to heaven” because she missed her mother. She’d merely been chasing after



one thing in order to evade another: her sadness and loneliness.

Once she'd acknowledged that, her heart had become clear of the haze that had been clouding her judgment.

She had the feeling she would finally be able to accept the reality of Emma's death.

The reason why was because there were now a pair of black eyes in front of her.

Even if Shall left after she gave him the sugar sculpture, the fact that he'd come back once to help her would remain. Somewhere in this world there would always be at least this one person who, if even for a moment, had shown her kindness. That was a miraculous thing. Ann felt as if she could go on living, just knowing that.

Furthermore, from now on, Ann could chase after her own true future. The future in which she would become a silver sugar master.

Not just for the sake of honoring her mother's memory, but as the future she would chose for herself.

*---- I want to become a silver sugar master. It doesn't matter how many years it takes...*

A new resolve was born in her heart.

*---- I'll become an even better silver sugar master than mama was.*

“I’ve found my enthusiasm again. It’s all thanks to you, Shall. Thank you. As promised, this sugar sculpture belongs to you. I’m returning it.”

Ann’s chest tightened with sadness at the thought that he would be leaving now. However, clinging to the genuine hope that had at last been born inside of her, Ann forced herself to smile.

Shall gazed at the sugar sculpture that she held out towards him. However, he quickly looked away, pouting.

“It looks disgusting.”

“Huh?!”

Shall said to Ann, who was glaring at him, “With sugar sculptures, if the form is good, the flavor will be too. If the form is mediocre, the flavor will be too. I want an especially delicious sugar sculpture, made by a silver sugar master.”

“Wh-what?! Don’t tell me you’re not satisfied?”

“I’m not satisfied.”

“Then, what more do you want me to do?!”

After all this time together, why was he being so peevish all of a sudden?

Being stared at by Shall’s beautiful eyes gave Ann a sweet sensation of soaring

Suddenly, Shall said smoothly, “I’ll get the sugar sculpture from you on this day next year. I don’t need it until then. I’ll stay with you until you become a silver sugar master and wait for it.”

Ann blinked.

“Eh... You’ll stay?”

“Is that bad?”

Shall glared at Ann ill-temperedly.

“It’s not... bad. Not at all. But... why?”

When asked why, Shall made an irritable face and seemed to be wracking his brain for an answer. However, after a moment, his face softened as he seemed to give in.

Instead of answering, Shall took Ann’s right hand in his. Then...

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“Ann,” he called, his voice a whisper.

It was the first time he’d called her by her name. At this, Ann felt heat well up in her chest.

Shall gently kissed the back of Ann’s hand. Tenderly.

It was like he was making some kind of vow.

Ann wasn’t sure what the kiss meant. However, her heart was beating impossibly fast.

Shall gazed at Ann.

*---- Such beautiful eyes... They’re straight-forward, truthful...*

Tenderness welled up inside of Ann, a feeling that was born inside of her for the first time. There was something about it that was different from the love you’d feel for a friend.

That might have been her first love.



Just then...

“Hey, did you see?! My once-in-a-lifetime performance!”

Together with his cheerful voice, Mythrill Reed Pod came hopping towards them, cutting through the crowded square. Shall nonchalantly released Ann’s hand.

Mythrill took an exceptionally large leap and landed lightly on Ann’s shoulder. Happiness and shame welled up within Ann at the same time.

“Mythrill!”

Without thinking she grabbed Mythrill and hugged him tightly.

“I’m so sorry! I’m sorry, Mythrill! I’m sorry I suspected for even a moment that you ate the silver sugar. I was an idiot. I’m sorry I couldn’t continue believing in you. Forgive me.”

“I-I-I-I’m Mythrill Reed Pod! D-don’t shorten it! Anyways, there’s nothing to forgive. If it weren’t for your sake, I wouldn’t have gotten the chance to give such a magnificent performance.”

Although Mythrill had turned bright red, once he extracted himself from Ann’s arms he pridefully rubbed a finger under his nose.

“But I doubted you, even if it was only for a moment...”

“Hmph. Humans are all a bunch of idiots. It only makes sense that you’d be an idiot, too. So, I’m not surprised that you misunderstood, and my resolve to repay the favor I owe you hasn’t changed. I’m a fairy! If I gave up on repaying my debts that easily, I’d be ashamed to call myself a fairy.”

Mythrill’s chest puffed out with pride even as he said something incredibly rude.

“Once I realized that guy’s evil plan, I thought I’d teach him a lesson. That guy really is a bad person. I thought I’d teach him some humility, so I ate an entire barrel full of his silver sugar!”

Mythrill started to laugh maniacally, but part way through he suddenly moaned unpleasantly.

“As can only be expected when you’ve eaten an entire barrel of silver sugar... I think I’m going to puke... Ugggh...”

Considering the way fairies ate, Ann had no guess what would come out of where if one puked. However, since it appeared she was about to receive an outrageous demonstration of exactly that phenomena, Ann took a step back and braced herself.

“Well, I didn’t end up being very useful... In fact, I have the feeling I ended

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up putting you in tight spot...” Mythrill reflected in a small voice, even while posturing arrogantly.

“That’s not true. Thank you, Mythrill. But, how did you know that Jonas was the one who stole my silver sugar? Did you follow after us in secret?”

“I was in your wagon the whole time.”

“Eh?”

When Ann turned to look at Shall in surprise, he shrugged his shoulders.

“After being suspected of stealing the silver sugar, Mythrill Reed Pod ran into the back of your wagon and hid. He did indeed ‘disappear from your sight.’”

“S-so that’s what he meant...”

Jonas hijacked Ann’s wagon with Mythrill hiding inside it, and in the end got done in by him.

Mythrill snorted.

“Did you forget? In order to repay my debt, I’ll follow you anywhere. I’ll follow you even to the depths of hell.”

“But you’ve already more than repaid the favor by teaching Jonas a lesson this



time.”

“Not yet! The repayment of my debt isn’t going to be something like this! You’re going to let me repay you in a much more magnificent way.”

“Ahaha... A magnificent way...?”

Who knew what he had in mind. Ann was a bit worried.

Shall said dryly, “Have you ever heard of an ‘unwelcome favor,’ Mythrill Reed Pod?”

“Nope, sorry. Anyways, what are *you* doing with Ann? We’ve arrived in Lewiston already, so Ann should have compassionately set you free by now. You’re free to go wherever you want, right? So what are you doing here?!”

“There’s something I want from this scarecrow.”

He’d called her ‘scarecrow’ again. Ann was disappointed.

*---- When I thought I heard him call me ‘Ann’ earlier, could that have just been a hallucination?*

“You’re a through-and-through rude fellow, Shall Fen Shall! No matter how much Ann looks just like a scarecrow, and that’s putting it kindly, don’t keep calling her ‘scarecrow,’ ‘scarecrow’!”

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“What’s wrong with calling a scarecrow ‘scarecrow’?”

“Y-you bastard! You’re calling her ‘scarecrow’ again!”

“You’re the one calling her ‘scarecrow’ over and over.”

“A-anyways! In this world there are things that are wrong to say even though they’re true! Like ‘scarecrow’! It’s not something to laugh about; it hits too close to home!”

Ann laughed feebly.

“You guys... When will the two of you give me a break and realize that you’re *both* insufferably rude?”

Suddenly the two fairies seemed to come to their senses and stopped their dispute, looking at each other.

*---- I wasn’t able to become a silver sugar master this year. But the queen said that I should come again next year. That’s enough.*

An obsidian fairy who yearned for a delicious sugar sculpture...

And a water droplet fairy who wanted to repay his debt by force...

At the very least, Ann knew she wouldn’t be alone anymore.

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*---- I'm not alone. Maybe I'll be able to become a silver sugar master one day.  
I've got my entire future before me. This is for the best.*

Ann smiled.

“Well, I guess it’s fine. Whether it’s ‘crow’ or ‘scarecrow.’ I will make make sugar sculptures for you guys. Beautiful, magnificent sugar sculptures. That’s all I can do.”

The sky was perfectly clear.

In the plaza of the imperial city, the sweet scent of many sugar sculptures filled the air.

Chapter 7 -- END

## **Author's Note**

Hello, everyone. Nice to meet you. My name is Mikawa Miri.

This book is a re-worked edition of the piece that won the judges' choice award in Beans's 7th annual novel competition. When I first applied to the Beans novel competition, what I was most worried about was, "I haven't violated any of the application guidelines, have I?" That's probably not what I should have been worried about, but I was terrified that I would be disqualified without my story even being read because of a guideline violation.

After perusing the application guidelines, the item I was most worried about was, "When converted to 400-character grid paper, the submission should be more than 150 pages and less than 300 pages." I wondered, "Does the conversion include blank spaces in the total number of characters?"

I wanted to ask someone, but I didn't have any friends who would know about something like that. Furthermore, even if I did have one, there's no doubt this is as stupid a question as "Teacher, do bananas count as snacks?"

What I eventually came up with was to make sure that I would neither fall below the minimum page count nor exceed the maximum page count regardless of whether or not indentations and blank spaces were counted in the total character number. After this I was relieved.

I streamlined the phrasing and whittled down the story.

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Then when the paragraphs were formatted, it was about 10 pages too short to be a novel, so I determined it necessary to rework the story.

Because I was a little *too* cautious of the submission guidelines, the finished product adhered to the guidelines but I got the feeling that it was a bit shorter than a normal novel.

But, because I was allowed to rework the story before the commercial release, I was able to add enough material to create a jam-packed story. I'd be happy if this release is even a bit better than the original submission.

I'm extremely grateful to the judges who carefully read and selected the manuscript that I fearfully, fearfully prepared and submitted. I also want to express my heartfelt thanks to the people from the editing department and everyone else connected with the screening process, for choosing my story long before the manuscript ever made it to the judges.

Additionally, there's my editor, who has kindly, gently guided this hapless author. I thank God a little every day for my kind editor. Thank you! Please take care of me from now on as well.

Additionally, yet again, there's the illustrator who drew the pictures in this book for me, Aki-sama. I was ecstatic when I found out that she would be doing the illustrations. The Shall and Ann that she drew were truly amazing. They're so lucky.

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Finally, there are the people who purchased this book for themselves.

If you weren't fond of this story, I'm deeply sorry from the bottom of my heart. Please laugh down your nose at me and forget all about it.

But if you were fond of this story, hooray! Thank you! I love you!

To everyone, let me say this again: thank you very much.

*Mikawa Miri*