

Will Mithra lead the government as Prime Minister or will he appoint Minits to lead the nobles?

Actually, this was of no interest to Mithra.

All Mithra really wanted to do was stay at home and paint as he pleases.

With his noble lineage and the authority of the Duke family, Mithra was considered a born ruler.

But that was a great misunderstanding.

To begin with, Mithra’s mother had good looks that made her beloved by the Emperor. She had a vague resemblance to Velgrynd and was a strong woman.

However, that was just on the outside.

Her appearance might have been misleading, but she was in fact a quiet woman. Otherwise, when she gave birth to Rudra, she would have been the empress in her own right.

It was a luxury allowed to a mother for a short time while Rudra grew up. She must have been quite an eccentric, because she chose not to do so and instead wished for her freedom.

But then she was discovered by Duke Balsa Hillmenard, Mithra’s father.

Balsa was a handsome man. So it is generally believed that Mithra’s mother made a pass at him. Perhaps he was pushed aside by the queen’s selfishness.

But that’s not true.

Truthfully, it was Balsa who made the passive overture.

They loved each other and Mithra was born. They are still in love today, but that’s beside the point.

I don’t want to do politics, either. I’m tired of these suckers. But…

To Mithra’s dismay, he was surprisingly popular. On top of that, he’s smart and has never been caught up in a conspiracy before.

That’s why Mithra has so many followers, and they sometimes gets ahead of themselves in things he does not want them to do.

The worst was the downfall of a count.

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That day, Mithra’s shoulder bumped into the Count’s. It was a careless accident, but the Count didn’t apologize.

Mithra was still in his early 20s and the other man must have taken him for a fool. Maybe if he’d known Mithra was Duke’s son, he might have reacted differently, but it was too late.

“You! I’m a Count! Don’t you have any sense of propriety!?”

He remembers watching the man calmly as he shouted at him.

He was reminded of a story he had heard from a friend from another world, saying that this person might not have enough calcium to get so angry at such a thing.

And then Mithra muttered, “I’m in trouble.”

Mithra had not yet succeeded to the Duke’s seat, and the current Count was in a superior position. However, he had been taught never to bow to a lower-ranked person, and he was wondering what to do in this situation.

‘I'm in trouble’—With that one sentence, it would develop into a really troublesome case.

“Mithra-sama is in trouble.”

“How dare the Count embarrass Mithra-sama. Oh, dear. What a horrible mistake.”

And then Mithra’s friends got into a frenzy.

He didn’t know where they had been hiding, but immediately after that, knights in black showed up in a hurry. And several of them restrained the Count.

“Ah, ah…”

Only then did the panicked Count realize who Mithra was.

But it was already too late.

The captain bowed to Mithra and told him,

“Please leave this person's disposal to us.”

“Yes, I’ll leave it to you”—It was Mithra who had no choice but to say so.

The next day’s newspapers laid out the evidence of the Count’s deceit. Whether it was a true crime or a fabricated one, Mithra would never know.

All that is certain is that the Count had been arrested and his title was vacated.

Needless to say, the fear of Mithra from those around him had grown.

One bump on the shoulder can destroy an opponent. It was an incident that Mithra would never forget, as he realized he had the power to do just that.

There had been similar incidents since then, and despite having no intention of doing so, Mithra had come to reign as a fearsome nobleman.

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Because of that, Mithra knows how to speak up for himself.

That’s why it became so quiet.

And now this.

According to the investigation of the best agents under the Duke’s, it seems that Rudra’s disappearance is certain.

Whether he was dead or ran away doesn’t matter.

What mattered was that Velgrynd, the Empire’s guardian dragon, had endorsed Chosen Hero Masayuki as the new Emperor.

—It is assumed that the mysterious Marshal is actually “Scorch Dragon” Velgrynd-sama. And it is likely that the man to whom she is attached to is the true successor of Rudra-sama’s soul—

That was what the report stated.

Anyone with even a modicum of intelligence to think against this would understand that it’s impossible.

The Empire’s succession to the throne is different from others in that it doesn’t place much importance on bloodlines. No, it may be considered important to the public, but to the truly noble ones, Rudra’s soul was what was most important.

The Duke, Mithra, naturally understood this.

This…if things go wrong, not only will it destroy my, it will destroy everything. It’s not safe for my men to be out of control. I must make up my mind and make my move.

It was only natural for the wise Mithra to make this decision.

Ideally, he would have wanted to stay out of politics and still keep his influence over the nobles.

If his current title is secured in the future, then he wouldn’t have to struggle financially. Even if he didn’t force himself to participate in politics, he could still dream taking a stipend and living a life of painting.

If this is the best thing that could happen, the next best thing would be to stay in the countryside.

It would be better to manage the estate and live as a provincial lord. That would keep him busy for a bit but still leave him time to paint. He wouldn’t have to socialize too much, so it was a good place to start.

The worst thing that could happen would be to touch Velgrynd’s reverse scale.

But that would be useless.

Now is the time to prevent that from happening.

Mithra decides to make a plan here.

He wants to use his bad reputation and aim for his expulsion from the capital.

If he acts arrogant, or rather, if he speaks as he normally would, his opponents would find Mithra troubling. Then after it’s all over, he can just reason about what he’s doing, pretend to be angry about it all, and leave.

Negotiations would break down. But Mithra would realize his disadvantage and slip away from the capital to the provinces.

That was the story he had planned to tell.

And yet, Minits gave him two incomprehensible choices.

“Do you want to control the Empire? Or do you want to work hand in hand with us?”

The answer is to refuse both.

But that wouldn’t be nice to say.

Mithra ponders.

The conversation of Minits continued.

Even Testarossa, a diplomat from the monster country, has joined them to prove their legitimacy.

He knows this without being told.

Knowing all the facts was the basis of the negotiations.

Now, what can I do? Those are two choices, and I don’t want to take either one. Being in politics in this country as it stands now is a straight line to death. If I work any more hours, I won’t have time to paint or play with my beloved daughter!

Mithra has a daughter whom he loves.

She is only three years old. So cute.

He also has a newborn son.

What he was wondering about was his wife, who couldn’t even look at Mithra after his son was born.

The daughter of the Marquis family, whom Mithra had fallen in love with at first sight. A woman who came to live with him the day after he asked her to be his wife.

She who had become of a thoughtful wife, has been a source of anxiety for Mithra as of late.

Although she had been distant from the beginning of their marriage, he thought it couldn’t be helped since they had just begun to get used to each other. Their daughter was born smoothly and they were expecting a boy. He was hoping they would slowly grow in love with each other at this rate…

Yes. I have to say no, or I’d lose the time to talk to my wife. I don’t care what happens to the empire, but I have to prevent my family from becoming unhappy!

Mithra again made up his mind.

He had planned to settle the matter amicably today, but a little turbulence was inevitable.

And now he has his ‘answer’.

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“It’s ridiculous. Isn’t this a usurpation of the throne? Sleep when you talk in your sleep. And Testarossa-dono, was it? What right do you have to meddle in the domestic affairs of our Empire? It’s true that the Empire was defeated in a war. But by renouncing the airspace rights and making a treaty between nations, you have established peace between the Empire and your country. Now that you’ve established diplomatic relations, are you saying that you have the right to interfere with the sovereignty of a friendly nation?”

It was a dangerous gamble. And yet, Mithra decided to take the plunge.

He has trapped a demon lord’s diplomat with formidable power. She is the Demon Lord’s plenipotentiary abroad and there is no denying the possibility of another war if she is offended.

Mithra knows that she is the White Primordial (Blanc). He knows that he is speaking outrageously against the great demon feared by the Empire.

“Oh my, did I go too far in my imitation?”

“Humph! I won’t ask you to leave this room. I’m sure your master would like to know what the friendly country’s future plans are.”

“I appreciate your concern, sir.”

Come on, get angry! He wished that she would but was so confused that she easily swept it along.

I thought if I told them that, they would move to exclude me…but what do they think?

He was wondering what he should do if she was enraged, but this calmness is confusing.

Too much anger and he’d lose his life. Since he felt his life was about to be cut short even with that comment, it was unthinkable to make any more aggressive comments.

What do I say? Do I want to take it another step further?

That step was scary to no end.

Therefore, he would turn the tables on them.

“I am the great Rudra’s half-brother. Now that the life or death of my older half-brother is unknown, you would shamelessly ask for my help by choosing to welcome a new emperor, a man from nowhere named Masayuki? I have no idea what you’re thinking!”

Mithra burst into a rush just a little more emphatically than usual.

Depending on this reaction, the situation would be changed promptly. This is where the real fight begins.

But unfortunately—

—Mithra’s gamble turned out in the worst possible way.

“Oh my, do you disagree with my decision? If you think you’re going to be overlooked just because you’re related to Rudra, I’m going to have to tell you that you’re too naive.”

Gah, geez, Velgrynd-sama —!?

An unspeakable scream erupted from Mithra’s heart.

Mithra was so shocked that his soul felt as if it was going to slip out of his mouth.

The odds were no longer stacked against him, but rather were completely against him.

For some reason, Mithra felt refreshed that it was over for him.

Maybe that’s why he felt like it was the time to say what he wanted to say.

“Marshal-dono—no, it’s Velgrynd-sama, the guardian dragon of the empire, isn’t it? I was not told that you would be attending today’s meeting, but it is a pleasure to meet you.”

First of all, the appeal is not that big a deal?

He really wanted to run away, but was enlightened by the fact that it was impossible anyway.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I really don’t think being the Emperor is a party, either. But when I think about the people who live in the Empire, I think it’s best for me to be the Emperor…”

Following Velgrynd, who opened the door without a sound and entered the room, Masayuki also appeared.

For Mithra, it was completely unexpected.

Judging from the situation, he had no choice but to realize that his fate was completely sealed.

However, there was one thing that bothered him.

“Huh? Your Majesty doesn’t seem quite confident about this. Do you think that makes you a better person than my half-brother?”

He asked with a sarcastic tone, but was half truthful.

If they’re going to get rid of him anyway, he should have called their bluff more openly.

“Hahaha, I was just a student a while ago, you know? I never imagined that I would be an emperor, confident or not.”

“Humph, you’re pathetic. You think you can walk with supremacy just like that?”

“Hmm, I’m sorry. But I wasn’t really planning on supremacy, you know?”

But…Huh? Isn’t that a strange thing to say? I hadn’t noticed from the reactions of Minits and Calgurio, but this doesn’t seem to be consistent with the information my subordinates have been finding out.

Mithra’s own intelligence services had reported that the new Emperor was a man of great strength. His popularity among the people was so great that even Demon Lord Rimuru, who had never given the Empire a second thought, looked up to him.

And yet the smiling boy in front of him didn’t really fit his image.

What’s going on?

Mithra couldn’t help but look at him again.

“No…to tell you the truth, I really want you to forgive me for the supremacy.”

“What?”

A voice spilled out of Mithra’s mouth.

And it wasn’t just Mithra.

“Hey, Your Majesty! I asked you to be more dignified here!”

“That’s right. Whether or not we can get Mithra-dono on board here will have a great impact on the future course of the Empire’s governance. For my sake and that of Minits, we need a companion to share our struggles with.”

Minits and Calgurio were pleading with him at the same time.

It’s too late now that I saw it in front of me. And now that I overheard the conversation, I don’t want to be asked to join them…

To be honest, he’s getting the feeling that he’d absolutely hate it.

However, he also thinks it’s better to just survive than to be disposed of like this. Mithra wasn’t stupid, so he knew perfectly well that he had no initiative left.

“You fools. Uou haven’t forgotten your promise not to coerce Masayuki, have you?”

“No, no, Velgrynd-san!? It’s okay—I’m fine!”

“Masayuki-sama!”

“Your Majesty!”

Masayuki hurriedly hushes a slightly grumpy Velgrynd. Seeing this, Minits and Calgurio are impressed.

“Oh my, Masayuki. I’ve been thinking about it for a while now, but I wish you’d call me by my nickname, Gryn, or whatever you want to call me.”

“Oh, yes. Um, so, Gryn-san, then?”

“Ufufu, that’s nice to hear, Masayuki. Unlike Rudra, you’re a straight-shooter. If you don’t mind Calgurio and the others, it’s none of my business. Good for you, both of you.”

“Yes, thank you!”

“His Majesty’s gratitude, I will remember it for the rest of my life!”

Velgrynd’s mood seemed to have improved and he was relieved.

Watching the whole process, Mithra realized from the bottom of his heart that he was in trouble.

I see. I suppose the only reason they want to involve me is not just to stabilize the situation. They really want to have a friend to help diffuse the anger from Velgrynd-sama. But then again, what about that boy, Masayuki?

Mithra wondered if he was the same as him.

And Mithra wasn’t the only one who felt that way.

“By the way, it was Mithra-san, correct?”

“I don’t recognize you, but it seems you’re the Emperor. You can call me whatever you like.”

“Then I’ll take you up on your offer. What do you think of me, Mithra-san? I mean, I don’t know, maybe I just seem like a normal young man to you?”

“What do you mean? You’re the Emperor. There’s nothing normal about you.”

“No, no, that’s not what I’m talking about, I just want you to calm down and give me an honest answer.”

“So, what are you talking about?”

Mithra couldn’t understand what Masayuki was trying to say.

But the outcome of this response would determine Mithra’s fate.

“Mithra-san thinks I’m mediocre, right?”

“Do you mean to imply that I am disrespectful? Then I must confess that you are nowhere near as good as my older brother. Emperor, you don’t seem capable of rising above the rest of us.”

‘If I say this, I’ll be ruined.’ Mithra thought so, but he was in a desperate mood.

If he was going to be done in by the hands of Velgrynd anyway, he wanted not to suffer. He thought that even Velgrynd, who was driven by passion, would fulfill such a wish.

But the response he got was much more than that.

It wasn’t from Velgrynd, but from Masayuki.

“Mithra-san! You’re awesome! I needed someone like you!!”

“Huh?”

He didn’t know what he meant, but when he asked him, Masayuki responded passionately.

“You know, because of my authority, other people always think I’m this great guy.”

Masayuki shouts.

No one else could imagine how much trouble he had suffered because of the Unique Skill ‘Chosen One’ he acquired.

And now, the unique skill had evolved into the Ultimate Skill ‘King of Heroes’. The power was tremendous, and even though anyone could understand that it was a bad idea to leave politics to amateurs, he had been treated as an exception.

“What, you mean…?”

“So, that’s why I’m so happy to have someone like Mithra-san who understands the real me!”

Wet droplets spill out of Mithra’s eyes.

“Masayuki-kun—no, Your Majesty!”

Masayuki’s hardships were no stranger to the world. But Mithra could understand them as if they were his own.

That is not all.

If he was the one who understood Masayuki, he felt that the opposite was also possible.

“Hey, now that you understand me, you don’t have to call me Your Majesty!

“Yes, that’s right. I understand, I understand. I’ve had the same kind of pain in my heart.”

“What?”

“I want you to listen. At the worst time, a person was arrested just because I had whispered, ‘I’m in trouble.’ Honestly, I almost thought to stop opening my mouth at all. It was impossible, but it was hard not to be able to speak my mind.”

“I understand! In my case, even when I speak my mind, it doesn’t come through. It’s interpreted by others, and my reputation just goes up. Seriously, give me a break! And the next thing I knew I was an Emperor, you know?”

“That’s scary too.”

“Right! I’m really scared. My buddy Jinrai-san was horrible at the beginning. He is understanding now, but he used to fight with Rimuru-san all the time! I can’t tell you how many times I wish he’d stop mentioning my name…”

“I can understand that. That’s why I didn’t bring a chaperone with me this time. I was afraid of what they might say.”

Negotiations broke down over one person’s comments as if it was a common story in the past. Only this time, he couldn’t afford to make such a mistake.

“That’s a common story. No, well, I thought it was just me.”

“Hahaha, it’s been hard on both of us.”

“It’s no laughing matter, seriously.”

Masayuki and Mithra talked with each other, forgetting about everyone else’s existence.

They had smiles on their faces.

And before long, a friendship had blossomed.

“…Yes, I was immunized by my mother because she had Rudra in her body. I’ve been alive for a long time but I’ve never seen this happen before.”

Even Velgrynd was surprised.

But for now, to celebrate their friendship, they watched in silence.

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Now that Masayuki and Mithra had become good friends, all the problems were cleared up.

Therefore, Mithra agreed to help.

However, instead of being directly involved in politics, he decided to bundle up the aristocrats of his family and support them from behind the scenes.

He has a true desire to spend more time on his own, but he decided after a discussion that this would be more convenient for him.

“I will keep things the way they are and unite those noblemen who are unhappy with the current situation. However, I’ll also try to persuade the more capable ones to cooperate with you.”

“Thank you. We are seriously short on staff.”

“It would be better for the military as well. A poor rebellion would only lead to a loss of personnel. If Mithra-dono is willing to work with us, we can take the rebels in over time.”

And so, the situation was wrapped up nicely.

The meeting had ended and the venue was dismissed.

“One moment, please.”

Testarossa spoke to Mithra as he stood up.

“Mithra-dono, can you give me a moment of your time?”

Mithra was shocked.

He remembered exactly what he had said to Testarossa. He was relieved that the situation had been cleared, but maybe he had been naive.

“What is it?”

He sat back in the chair, trying hard not to let his voice tremble.

“No, it’s just something I was wondering about earlier, so I had to do some digging. You have a hidden Skill, don’t you?”

“What? I’m just a guy who—”

Mithra tried to deny it, thinking that the cloud had shifted, but he was interrupted by Testarossa. Interrupting him, Testarossa continued to speak.

“Oh, don’t get me wrong. It’s an unconsciousness type, that’s right, the Unique Skill ‘Villain’ 40 right? It’s sort of like it’s been handed down from generation to generation. Maybe it’s your father’s side? Are you scared by me?”

“…”

He was terrified.

Mithra had been taught that it was the fate of the eldest son of the Hillmenard Dukes.

“If you realize that, I’m sure you’ll be able to take advantage of negotiations better in the future.”

It was uncharacteristic of Testarossa to tell him that. It’s not often that Testarossa was nice to someone she likes.

“Wow, that kind of power…”

“It’s true. I’m not going to tell you how to use it, but I’m going to tell you one more thing, as a great service.”

“Mm?”

“You’re scared for your wife too.”

“No way. My wife is so shy, we’ve never had a fight. Not once have I ever yelled at her.”

‘How stupid’ Mithra laughs.

Testarossa smiles bitterly.

“I’m pretty sure that’s the information I got to help you negotiate this deal. Your mother was immune to it, so it probably wouldn’t have been a problem, but your wife…”

“No way…”

“Still, it’s family. You understand Mithra-dono, don’t you?”

“That’s right. You just had a second child, didn’t you? If so, I’m sure your wife loves Mithra-dono, too.”

An upset Mithra.

Calgurio and Minits talk to Mithra as if to console him.

But it is Velgrynd who shatters that atmosphere.

But it was also a word of truth.

“You’re an idiot. You’ve been waiting for your first son, haven’t you? Maybe your wife thinks that since she bore you an heir as a nobleman’s wife, she’s done her duty. Did you ever tell your wife how you felt in the first place?”

“Do you mean…?”

“Have you ever told her you love her? Have you ever thanked her for giving birth to your child?”

Mithra realized that he had never said such a thing. He realized his stupidity and his face paled at once.

“Expressing your feelings in words is surprisingly a very important part of keeping your affections together. Shouldn’t you take this opportunity to tell your wife how you feel?”

Testarossa told him and Mithra nodded his head.

“I’m sorry for this!”

And with that, he ran away as fast as he could.

When Mithra returned home, he saw his wife, who was just about to leave the house.

He had arrived just in time.

Mithra had correctly understood and acted on the advice of Velgrynd and Testarossa. As a result, he had avoided the worst situation of divorce.

From that day forward, Mithra never forgot his gratitude.

He energetically cooperated with the new Emperor, Masayuki, and supported the empire behind the scenes.

Thus, all three major factions of the Imperial aristocracy fell under the command of the new Emperor Masayuki. The stabilization of the ruling system, which was expected to take years, was accomplished in a matter of months.

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The night of the day Mithra-dono became a friend.

“It was exactly as Testarossa-dono had said, huh?”

“Well, yes. There was a lot of luck, though, with the help of Demon Lord Rimuru-sama and Velgrynd-sama.”

Minits and I 41 were having a toast at a restaurant in the Imperial City.

Now that the nobles’ problem was solved, the only problem left was the Aggressors.

We were sending agents to every corner of the Empire to check for signs of trouble. If anything is happening, there will be reports, and we would have the reorganized Imperial Knights stationed in the provincial cities. We can’t be too careful, but we can at least allow ourselves some breathing room.

That’s why he planned to drink to his heart’s content tonight.

They’d talk about their struggles and our hopes for the future of the empire.

Come to think of it, he never thought he’d be so close to Minits. He was a good soldier, but he never would have let him in.

Now he is a dear friend.

And together they are the best supporters of His Majesty.

They drank more drinks, and he became drunk enough.

Then Minits came in with a topic.

“So, changing the subject, how does it feel to have power over most people?”

I think about that question again.

And then I answer.

“It’s a hollow feeling. Like I’ve lost sight of my goal.”

“Then you don’t need this anymore, do you?”

With that, Minits held out an envelope to me.

I wonder if there was a stack of papers in it. It had some kind of thickness.

“What is this?”

“Don’t open it here.”

Minits slurred his words and paused to gulp down his glass.

Then he put down his empty glass and stood up.

“Hey, are you going home?”

“Oh. That’s the report I had you look at years ago, just to give me a bargaining chip against you. I don’t need it anymore, and I’ll do it. There was something that was bothering me, so I’m letting you take a look at it. I’m a little surprised myself, so you might even be happier not knowing.”

“Hm?”

“If you’re not interested in your past, don’t read it, and burn it.”

There was no further explanation from Minits.

He just waved his hand and left without answering my questions, not even looking back.

I was left alone, but I didn’t feel like drinking any more.

I was more interested in what Minits had to say.

There was no doubt that this material was about me.

And it was my weakness?

I don’t have a family. I’m not saying that I wasn’t dirty, but I was never part of any wrongdoing that merited punishment.

I’m sure Minits knew that too…

All I can think of is that it involved the woman who was my wife.

Is it my past?

Come to think of it, my vengeance wasn’t complete.

It would be pretty easy for me to destroy the Count or anyone else. That’s why I was so proud that I could do it at any time, and I let my revenge go unchecked.

“Well, maybe it’s a good idea to face the past to bring closure here.”

I muttered to myself and left the restaurant.

I returned to my mansion in the imperial capital and went into my room.

I took the material from the envelope Minits gave me and read it.

“Ridiculous…”

What was written there was so shocking that I couldn’t help but mutter to myself.

When I saw the description “Count Balduff”, I realized I had forgotten the name of the object of my revenge.

That’s fine, but it was hard to believe what happens next.

The Count Balduff is said to have put together a sect of local aristocrats.

But it was at a level easy to ignore.

Not to mention the name of the baron with the woman who was my ex-wife, all of the lower aristocrats, such as the Viscount and the Baron, follow.

If the scale was large enough, they would be noticeable, but with a force of less than ten, they were probably overlooked.

However, there was a description that I could not overlook.

“—It's a noble family who follows, but there is a high possibility that the reign has been hijacked, right?”

What does that mean? I rushed to read the rest of the report.

The houses that followed were said to have had honorable men in their families.

They didn’t care about dealing with black marketers, and they ruled their lands legitimately.

That’s why it was so easy to push him into a corner.

“It appears that Balduff has been saddled with debts by the the hired traders and is being made to do their bidding.”

That was stated in the report.

My mind was racing with information.

If this is true, then I can’t forgive Count Balduff.

No, it’s more than that—

“Mamiya!”

I yelled to myself.

About me, my wife might really…

When it occurred to me, I couldn’t sit still any longer.

I hurriedly headed for the door.

“Hey, sir! Are you going out this late?”

“I’ve got to go. Get my personal guard up on the airfield. Also, tell your intelligence officer to send his men there as well.”

“—!! Right away!”

My head butler is a capable man.

He could tell from my mood that this was no ordinary situation.

He didn’t ask any further questions, but carried out my orders quickly.

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We’ve solidified the evidence during the night.

The report was accurate, and there was no excuse for it.

Only one person screamed and refused to admit the reality.

“You’re a dead man.”

“You! Who do you think I am1? I’m Balduff! With what authority do you have to arrest me, one of the eight princes who unite the provincial lords?”

The foolish man had refused to admit his guilt in this case.

Well, there is certainly a reason for Balduff to scream.

Because in our empire, just because they are aristocrats, they have non-arrest privileges.

A noble can only be arrested if the Emperor has issued a warrant for his arrest.

However, all Imperial Knights of the Imperial Guardians are eligible, as are certain members of the Intelligence Community.

Which means—

“Count Balduff, the charges against you have been confirmed. The victims have testified, and I hope you will understand that there is no longer any excuse for this.”

Of course, I have the right to arrest him based on what the information bureau staff brought.

I know how important it is to arrest a highborn Count. I’d like to execute him myself, but I’m afraid that would be above my pay grade.

If I put my hand down, I could kill him without causing much pain. I can’t bring myself to show that kind of mercy to this man.

“Don’t be a fool! What authority do you have!?”

“Shut up, Balduff. Have you forgotten my face?”

I stared Balduff squarely in the eye so he could see my left eye patch.

“You’re not really His Excellency Calgurio, are you!?”

“You know me?”

“Of course! Your exploits have been passed down throughout the Empire. I hear you were narrowly defeated by the filthy monster nation, but I believe that Your Excellency will surely be able to make up for it!”

This man is misunderstanding everything.

His fate would be even worse if Testarossa-dono could hear what he has to say.

If I tell her… No, I’m not going to tell her. Let’s not get angry and get too involved.

“I don’t like the way you talk about me. I suppose you laughed at me being kicked out of the baronial household.”

“—!! It’s a misunderstanding!”

I haven’t even explained to him yet, and that statement was already an admission of guilt.

“Don’t speak. I’ll let the Imperial High Council decide your fate, so be prepared for that. Unlike me, the torture officers are not so kind.”

I told him without changing my expression.

Balduff paled and shouted.

“Wait! Please wait! Calgurio-dono! I apologize. I apologize, and admit my sins.”

“Take him away.”

On my signal, the knights take Balduff away.

Balduff’s laxity is appalling.

The Imperial High Council is not an institution to clarify the crimes. It is designed to trap and deprive political enemies of their positions.

That’s why it doesn’t matter whether he pleads guilty or not.

The torturers don’t ask for the testimony of the guilty. They make a living depriving them of their dignity and subjugating them.

“At best, you’ll suffer and feel the resentment of the victims, including myself.”

I whispered softly to Balduff’s back, which was now quite small.

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After sending the knights back in the airship, I took my personal magic motorcycle (aura bike) to a small town in the outskirts.

After a short ride, I saw a familiar sight before my eyes.

Beyond the hill, I saw a mansion that had been left intact.

I used to think it was big, but now it seems quite small.

It was less than half the size of my mansion in the imperial capital.

But still, it was an important place to me.

“It’s been a long time. It’s like this place hasn’t changed at all.”

I don’t know why I said that.

I guess I’m just nervous.

After all, the woman I was about to meet was the one who abandoned me—no, no it’s not.

I already knew that it was a mistake.

All I need is courage.

It was late afternoon.

I remember my ex-wife relaxing in the front yard at this hour.

I scolded myself and rang the doorbell of the house.

“Yes, who is it?”

A familiar voice.

It was the voice of the house’s assistant butler, who was about ten years older than me.

“It’s Calgurio. I didn’t plan on coming back, but I’ve got a matter of importance to attend to. I’m sorry, but Mamiya—do you think you could send for Mrs. Heath?”

There was a pause for breath.

After a beat, there was a reply saying “Yes, sir.”

I was ushered into the parlor and waited for Mamiya to arrive.

All that was left to do was tell her what I really thought before that man came back.

That man is Baron Nest Heath, the man who drove me out and took over the Heath household. And now he’s in the next town over, where he’s supposed to be staying at his cousin’s beck and call, Viscount Zhuk.

The reason I know this is because I made the arrangements.

Balduff’s people had their knights arrest him last night. I told him to let Viscount Zhuk see the opportunity.

Of course, it was on purpose.

Since we’ve already investigated that Viscount Zhuk is Nest’s superior, I thought he would try to contact me once he heard about Balduff’s arrest and the disquieting situation.

I knew that Nest was moving, just as I had hoped.

It would take at least half a day to fly a horse to and from here to the next town and back. I heard he left early in the morning, so he shouldn’t be back until later in the evening.

That’s why I have to finish this before then.

“I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Your Excellency Calgurio. Is it okay to say that it's been a long time?”

I haven’t heard Mamiya’s voice in a long time, and my heart flutters.

I sit up and lock eyes with her.

“There’s no need for honorifics between you and me. How are you?”

Mamiya was thin.

She had makeup on, but it didn’t disguise the white that was starting to bleed into her hair. I realized that she didn’t have the money to spend on beauty.

It was definitely an unexpected visit, but still, as a noblewoman, I think it’s normal for a noblewoman to pay more attention to her appearance.

Although to me, Mamiya is Mamiya, no matter what she looks like…

It was reported that Nest was not valued because of its spending habits.

That was irresistibly annoying.

“Such a waste of words. I’m so relieved to hear that His Excellency Calgurio is looking well.”

Mamiya’s attitude remained stiff.

She doesn’t know why I’m here, and is nervous.

Sure enough.

“So, is the purpose of your visit today to punish me?”

It is a disposition to say such a thing.

“What do you mean?”

“Huh, my husband left in the morning, in a hurry. I knew he was up to no good, so you have proof of the wrongdoing, don’t you? I am the woman who betrayed you. I can’t think of any reason for you to be grateful to me alone.”

Mamiya’s eyes looked tired and hopeless as she said this.

It’s been twenty years since we parted.

I had been through a lot, and so had Mamiya.

I don’t know if I’m qualified to hear it, but I still have to resolve the misunderstanding.

“There is a reason you were my wife. And that love is as strong now as it was back then.”

“Joking—”

“It’s not a joke.”

Mamiya’s eyes wavered as I assured her.

“What do you mean—I’m a stupid woman. I’m no better than a dog and no better than a person who doesn’t deserve to be remembered by you. Because I’ve committed an unforgivable, mortal sin. I committed an irrevocable sin against you.”

At a loss for words, tears fell from Mamiya’s eyes. She had acted stoutly, but her words reminded her of her crimes.

Now I remember.

How could I have forgotten the most important things and resented Mamiya…

My father-in-law, who had been a baron, was a fine man and my esteemed master.

What a fool I had been, even though he entrusted me with his precious daughter…

“You’re not guilty of anything. I was a fool. I didn’t even notice that man’s trickery, and I hurt the one I swore to protect.”

I said slowly, as if to remind myself.

When Mamiya heard that, she looked at me in surprise.

Now she’s listening to me. I took this opportunity to say more.

“I don’t know why I didn’t believe in you, it’s such a shame—I understand the circumstances of the Heath family. Will you believe me again?”

“What are you talking about!? Again, I’m not someone who deserves it. Do you not have the right to punish us?”

“I’m the one who doesn’t have the right—It’s my fault for abandoning you. It's ended up like this, even though I swore to be the knight to protect you.”

So, give me another chance. With that wish, I kept staring at Mamiya, hoping that she would give me another chance.



“Can I trust you?”

Mamiya’s tears wouldn’t stop.

I scooped them up with my fingers and then nodded vigorously.

“I will never abandon you again.”

I accepted Mamiya gently as she jumped into my chest, and swore from the bottom of my heart.

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The servants of the Heath household were gathered and interviewed.

Everyone who worked for the house at the time worked together to protect Mamiya. The person who had drugged me was still here, so I had no trouble gathering evidence.

“I wish you would have consulted with me.”

When I said that, the man who had replaced my late father as the official head butler told me on behalf of everyone,

“They were threatening me . They were paying off our family's debts, and they were going to divert their rights to the black market. If that happened, not only your wife's life but also your would be in danger. I had no choice but to cooperate with the conspiracy he suggested. I'm so sorry. It's all because of our cowardice!”

Well, that was exactly what the report said.

I wasn’t as strong back then as I am now. I guess I was a good knight…but I had only been a B rank at best.

It would have been impossible for me to defend this house alone.

“It’s all over now. What matters is what happens from now on.”

“…Indeed, you’re right. I will take care of all the punishments, so please be lenient with the members of the house.”

When the head butler said this while bowing low, the other servants also apologized.

That scene was a representation of my father-in-law’s humanity.

“Don’t be mistaken. I was wrong too, so I don’t want to put all the blame on you guys. So please continue to support us well.”

I tell them that.

We were all in the same boat.

So I wanted them to join me on the joint responsibility.

“Calgurio-sama—!!”

Tears welled up in the butler’s eyes.

However, right after that, he tilts his head as if he’s noticed something.

“Hmm? It’s natural to support your wife, of course, but are you supporting us?”

He found out.

“Um, Calgurio… sama? What do you mean by that?”

Even Mamiya wonders.

This is the moment of truth.

I’m truly afraid of what would happen if they rejected me, but I gather my courage and tell them.

“What? It’s true. We were all wrong. I mean, the fact that we were divorced was wrong, too, so we should just pretend that it never happened. Do you think so too?”

Unlike my inner heart, I appeared calm.

Honestly, that logic is hard to push through.

Not only did Mamiya and I file for divorce, but Nest and Mamiya’s remarriage vows were duly filed and accepted long ago by the Imperial Court.

It would normally be impossible to overturn this, but I was confident that Minits would do something about it.

“So, you mean, we’re going to be married again?

“Yes, I do, but do you want that?”

I think my heart is pounding.

“Are you sure you want to go through with this? I want you to—”

“I hope so. I hope you’ll accept it.”

“But the drugs…”

She may be talking about drugging me that time, but that was settled too.

His Majesty Rimuru revived this body. He said it was fertile, so I’m certain that any effects of the poison have vanished.

“You don’t have to worry about that. Maybe, but it’s okay. So, can you and I start our marriage over again?”

It was a confession of the whole body.

I thought one marriage proposal was enough, but I never thought I’d get to do it again with the same woman.

But if I didn’t pull this off, I was likely to remain empty for the rest of my life.

I waited for Mamiya’s response, more nervous than preparing for a fight.

Mamiya’s eyes lit up…

…and a smile came to her face.

Beautiful.

In this moment, Mamiya had regained a beauty that had been lost over the past twenty years.

“With pleasure,”

My blank heart was filled with joy.

And at the same time,

The servants cheered us on with blessings.

I had served my purpose.

The small matter of Nest remains, but the fact that he was the head of the Baron Heath will be blotted out, so he’s probably doomed anyway.

Nest’s status will return to that of a merchant. Unlike a nobleman, the privilege of immunity from arrest does not apply to him as a merchant.

Any crimes he commits will be imputed to him and he’ll never see the light of day again.

Criminal acts against noblemen means he’ll have to take it against his own people. It will destroy his father.

“This worked out well. I don’t care if I have to arrest him now.”

“Yes, sir. Well then, I’ll capture both Viscount Zhuk and dispose of them here.”

“Yes, then please.”

I pushed the miscellaneous things to my subordinates.

The case was closed.

Thus, I was reunited with Mamiya and became the head of the Heath family once again.

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“Congratulations on your marriage, if I may say so?”

“It’s not a new marriage, and yet it’s not a remarriage, though.”

Me and Minits were once again exchanging drinks at the Imperial City’s restaurant.

“Hmm. Well, whatever it is, I wish you well with your wife.”

“Thank you. And also, it helped me with the process.”

“Yeah, that was a tough one. If you brought up the statute of limitations, it was impossible to turn it over. I’m sorry, but I had to resort to the hardball approach.”

“I hear you had a hard time.”

“Well, yeah. But I don’t mind. Just think of it as a congratulatory gift.”

Then Minits laughed.

“Thank you.”

I replied and smiled shyly.

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Then he asked me to dig into my marriage.

“Don’t be so ecstatic!”

“It’s all right. Come on. Marriage is good! You should stop being a bachelor and find a woman to be your partner for life!”

“Shut up. Don’t try to interfere in my private life.”

“Wahahahahaha! That’s why I was so brave at the time!”

“I’ve already heard that. For the fifth time.”

“It can’t be helped. If you want to listen to me so badly, I’ll make you listen to me as many times as you want.”

“You’re looking pretty drunk, man. I didn’t expect you to get so tangled up in it.”

…I can’t help but feel like he asked me, or that I just spoke on my own.

Well, that’s not the point, so if I care about it too much, it’s my loss.

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After a certain amount of rambling, he finally got down to business.

“So, about that file…”

“Was it useful?”

“What did you mean when you said it was a bargaining chip for me?”

“…Did you notice?”

“Of course. It was twenty years ago. From the time you said you did your research, that’s more than a decade ago. So how is it that the information on each individual is so comprehensive. With an investigation that detailed, even the Intelligence Bureau would be unable to do it!”

“Hmph, that’s a really sober point, if you’re drunk.”

Now that Minits has confirmed it, I’m sure of it.

“Testarossa-dono?”

“That’s right. She gave me something I thought might be useful to you.”

“That’s scary.”

“Yeah, totally.”

Honestly, I’m really scared.

I don’t know how they would have the resources to investigate in such detail.

The White Primordial—a demon long feared in the Empire.

It is said she was sealed by the Kings Guard in the “Lakeshore Dyed in Scarlet” incident

But now that was a bit of a mystery.

She was sealed on purpose.

Or rather, the seal was meaningless.

Testarossa-dono’s strength is her brain.

I’m told that she caused Velgrynd-sama problems despite their overwhelming difference in ability. That fact was a true testament to her fearfulness.

“From our point of view as a military department, if we have to deal with Testarossa-dono, we’ll lose on the strategic side. In other words, it’s a no-win situation. I hope you will keep that in mind as you consider your future dealings with the monster kingdom.”

“Idiot! You don’t have to tell me to understand that. I’m going to have to taste the bitterness of all those negotiations, before the war. I respect His Majesty Rimuru’s wisdom because you put him in the diplomatic service.”

Well, it seems that it was unnecessary advice.

Minits and I are in agreement, and this is a great relief to me.

There would be continued cooperation with the monster kingdom in the future.

At least for now, while Minits and I are alive.

But it’s a question of what happens after that.

The Monster Kingdom—It's like the leaders of the Jura Tempest Federation have no lifespan.

By contrast, in our empire, replacements will inevitably occur.

Velgrynd-sama is indifferent to politics.

She would complain about giving advice, but I feared for those who would replace others.

Becoming husband and wife with Mamiya has given me back my respect for my family. That’s why I fear for the future of the empire.

We have to come up with a system that prevents us from getting into conflict with the monster kingdom. And it’s for our children’s sake that we should educate them to keep it that way.

“We have a lot of work to do now.”

“Yeah. We’ve got a lot of work to do.”

I guess Minits had come to the same conclusion.

I smiled and tipped my cup with a grin.