Chapter 1 – Josee

And so it was, that the unfated soons find themselves on the brink of eternal sleep.

Snow falls. A droplet of ice fell on her face, as the warthm of her blood slowly dyed the snow a beautiful crimson art. She began rethinking her life choices, of which many regrets came to life.

A will to be something, to be better, to be superior, to be something greater. All crumbled at the fragility of one’s fate, and the folly of man’s nature. Her red trench coat, one she always wore for its beautiful radiant red now seemed fittingly ill at what was to be her end. A crimson dot in a sea of snow, all forgotten and abandoned.

And so, she closed her tired eyes.

And the light faded away.

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But the whim of fate is one that no soul could predict, throwing about all men and women as she pleases. Upon opening her eyes once more, the familiar warmth of yellow morning light brushed her face. A salty wind from an unfamiliar window caresses her nose, lifting a bit of her hair.

She looked around the room, and noticed an uncanny old architecture, one she would have seen in museums or really old parts of europe. Dark satin wood, white wooden walls, and windows with tiny squares filled with flattened shells.

A visceral feeling suddenly entered her body. Blood rushing, and the waves of emotion all coalescing into an indescribable feeling that made her feel confused and yet energetic.

She widened her eyes, the light that faded, returned, and she spoke.

“… I, am Alive”

However, it defied her expectations. As she turned to her left, her gaze fell upon a mirror, but the reflection it revealed was not her own. Before her stood a stunning young woman with lustrous brown-orange hair and captivating copper eyes. She cautiously slid her feet out of the plush white bed, her eyes trembling with disbelief. Slowly, she approached the mirror, hoping that her vision had deceived her.

She clasped her face, leaving no room for doubt: the woman staring back at her in the mirror was unmistakably herself.

The sound of a falling ceramic suddenly caught her attention. She swiftly turned, and saw a girl dressed like a maid. She dropped a bowl of water. From her guess, she was no older than 16. Her brown hair and blue eyes made contact with her.

“Ahh! Lady Josephine, you’re awake already! Oh thank the Divines!”

‘… Josephine?’, she wondered, ‘… Is that the name of this body?’

“My Lady”, the girl continued, “Is there anything I can do for you?”

She thought for a few moments. Her eyes, shaking about. Suddenly, she moved towards the window and opened widely it.

The bright light momentarily blinded her. But as the the effects faded, her eyes widened upon the sight of the landscape in front of her. A seaport town graced her eyes. Hundreds of townspeople populated the landscape below. And into the sea, dozens of sailing boats goes in and out.

Far beyond the shore cape was the moutains reaching the end of the lagoon. A forest full area filled with wild-life and little human habitation. The sight of a fertile, virgin land brought her utter shock.

“… Tell me… “, she asked, “What is my name?”

“Eh?”, the maid girl tilted her head, “Your nameis… Josephine Kalingrad. Your father calls you… Josee”

“… I see”, Josee lightly closed her eyes, breathing in the fresh scent of air.

“… Josephine Kalingrad”, she lightly spoke her name.

‘… None of this makes any sense, and this isn’t a dream either. Or perhaps it is’

She lightly stared into the sky, her eyes lazily opened, reflecting a smirk of annoyance.

“… The whims of fate. Why resurrect me in a shit novel?”

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It’s been three days since I arrived in this world. I waited, but the call to wake did not come, confirming this was not a dream. I sat here, in the night, in front of my table, with a lamp burning with oil. I wore my white, thin night gown. A refreshing clothe, and the most expensive one I own.

Alone, I write in a language that should not exist in this world, with a feathered quil I had never used before. Diligently scribing every bit of memory of the old world. And more importantly, of this world.

My father, Baron Kalingrad, is currently in the capital city, attending the annual Noble’s banquet. He hopes to find someone that will invest in our measely port territory. Potentially, this port could be a major hub, but piracy and the threat of a sleeping beast makes everything a sore deal.

“… And we’re in debt”, my father borrowed 50 gold coins from the baron Rotweiss to fund his travels. Assuredly, rotweiss did it with a greedy smile. His intent to steal our territory.

Thinking of that, I turned to look over the town. The houses were old, many buildings were decrepit, and the last storm washed away half the houses. The rest of town lives in makeshifts. It didn’t add to the fact that the nearby forest was not exactly safe. It was the safe haven of foul beasts. So, the people can only get so much material from it before retreating. I can understand why Josee’s father is in a desperate stance.

He’s an inadequate ruler.

Though it would greatly benefit me should this town prosper, after all, I need money… to get stronger. My eyes automatically turned dark, and I heaved a sigh of desperation.

“… No matter…”, I spoke coldly, “… This is a vain story of blindness and regret, of a meaningless life spent on vanity. It only rightly deserves to be destroyed”, I stretched my hands before picking the piles of documents to my left.

“… Now then… shall I secure some funds?”

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“… I see”, Josee coldly spoke, in a manner that made all servants in the room, man or woman, shiver in fear. Two soldiers wearing worn-out brigandine armor were standing before Josee. Busy looking at the documents, she did not give a single glance at the man kneeling in front of her, a man known in the town for his loyalty to the baron… but also for his excess.

What terrified them was not the mere coldness of Josee, it was the utter indifference as she ordered the guards to cut off one of his ears when he refused to answer.

In all their life, they had raised this young daughter with their very eyes. A young, beautiful, and cheerful girl. But that girl was no longer anywhere to be found.

All that’s left was a ruthless leader.

“… So, how much gold did you give to Baron Rotweiss from the start to now?”

“M-My lady… I- I don’t understand why you’re s-saying th-“

“… Gouge his eyes”, Josee coldly ordered.

“H-His eyes?!”, the two guards stared at one another in total dismay. Although they may be men holding weapons, battle was barely a part of their daily life, as most residents of the humble town, though they may be poor, had a sense of camaraderie. So, fights were mostly between drunkards.

Not torture.

“M-My lady!”, the man kneeling on the ground, wearing an oppulent dark suit held his left ear in fear. His body shivers, his sweat pours like rain, and his brown eyes were rapidly invigorated by the threat of his life.

“I had been steward of this barony for 24 years! W-What you’re doing is unfair, unjust, and inhumane! I will make sure the baron hears of th-!”

“Are you two fuckers deaf?”, Josee’s cold swearing caught the two guards off. The head maind standing behind Josee was also dismayed. Holding her head with both hands, she stepped heavily towards Josee. But before she could open her mouth, Josee cut her off.

“… Or do I have to accuse you both of insubordination and be trialed under the Noble Laws of the Kingdom?”, Josee casually remarked as she flipped the pages of a ledger before writing on a notebook.

““A-As you order my lady!””, the two shouted in unison, before one of the guard stepped forth and took his dagger, already bloodied from the previous transgression. The other guard pinned the man down. Paleness and sweating drenched their faces. But an order is an order.

“N-No!”, as the dagger came right to his eyes, the steward finally gave up.

“5500 gold! Approximately 5500 gold! I paid them because of my gambling habits!”, the man looked up. Barely seeing a fraction of Josee from the ground due to the papers that covered her table.

“… I see…”, Josee replied with no sense of surprise, “… Gouge his eyes”

And the two guards, with no question, began their assault once more

“Wait wait wait! P-Please my lady! My lady Josephine! W-Why-ArGHH!!!”, a blood boiling screech pierced the ears of every servant within the household. Shivers ran down their spine, and the head maid and servants could no longer watch that they immediately ran out of the room.

‘… I always thought… Sure, this household may not be the wealthiest, but the sea in these parts is bountiful and the taxes obtained aren’t much, but it isn’t small either’

Josee finally lifted her quil. After sorting through documents after documents for a whole day, she surmized the missing values, inconsistencies, and errors and concluded that someone is embezzling their funds.

“… Sign here…”, she handed a piece of paper in front of her table. With cold eyes, she ordered once more.

“… Pull him up and make him sign here”, as the guards pulled the blood filled steward who seems to almost lose his consciousness, they picked his hand and placed a quill in it.

“… Sign it”, Josee ordered.

“W-What is this.. ARGHh!”

With no more patience, Josee replied.

“… Sign it or I’ll personally butcher you”

“Y-YES!”, with blood flowing from his hands, the steward signed with great swiftness as if his life depends on it. Josee took the signed paper.

It was a legal paper stating that he is forfeighting all funds he had accumulated to Josee Kalingrad.

“… Good”, Josee nodded before looking straight to the guards.

“… Send him to the gallows. And have him executed”

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With the acquired gold from his house and the funds on the way from the merchant’s guild, I currently have a total of 2303 physical gold and 501 gold from the merchant’s guild.

A sufficient amount for my short-term goal, but this is just pocket money for the rich.

Well… I’ll carry a lot of money soon.

For now, I have to build a business to get a lot of money. This town is a mine of opportunities that I can use. Seeing the outside of the carriage I’m sitting in; this town truly was poor. The filth and shit outside disgust me. How unsanitary.

It made me frown.

No matter. I shall dawn them civilization.

I looked at the arm guard in my right hand. A leather guard with metal plating underneath. Currently, I adorn a leather armor, with a white tunic and long-sleeved undershirt. A dagger sat at my hips, and I carried a sheathed sword in my right hand.

“… We’re here”, I announced as the carriage stopped right in front of the market. Seating in front of me was my maid girl. I think her name was Misha. She’s like a scared rabbit, seating there trembling as if I’ll kill her.

“… Misha”, I softly spoker.

“Y-Yes?!”, she screamed. Immediately covering her mouth.

How cute.

“… Remember. The list I gave you”

“Y-Yes! I, I will buy them!”, I nodded before she left the carriage.

As I saw her figure disappear into the market, I ordered the driver to move.

Now then… I suppose it Is time.

The reason why I must become strong.

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A forest of madness.

Does it make sense that a forest like this, filled with horrifying monsters exists in these lands, and yet they do not invade the town?

No. Because this forest is artificial. because It shouldn’t exist, unless created by a mortal hand, or an immortal hand for that matter.

I walked through the shadow of the forests, wielding the necklace of the forest, an heirloom of the Kalingrad family. With the magical heirloom, I remained hidden among the trees, away from the dangerous eyes of predators.

Reptillian monsters, large apes with extra arms, insects of collosal size.

They’re beings that bring fear to anyone they encounter.

But I’ve been through worse. I suppose monsters are all the same regardless of worlds. I walked further down into the forest, hiding in the bushes, dead logs, and in the tree tops until I found myself right in the middle of a crevice.

A tiny, inconspicuous crevice.

“… So, it is here… the crevice that one of the male leads would find”

I entered.

Squeezing through the rocky walls, eventually, I found myself inside a dark cave. With a lamp in my right hand, the fire shined the dark and moist cavern, revealing a world of stalagmite and centipedes.

I walked forward, and right in front of me, behold. A chasm to the abyss. I do not know how deep it goes, just that whatever I need lies below there.

A boon, so to speak.

I went out again, squeezing through the entrance where I tied a rope from my bag to a tree. Then I tied that rope to my waist before going back once more.

Standing at the edge of the chasm, a sudden flash of memories rushed through my mind, one of a time that almost felt like last month, but truly a lifetime ago.

“The whims of fate”, I lightly smiled, before jumping down and starting to scale the walls with my hands and a curved axe. The lamp, hanging by my waist, illuminated the surrounding walls. And as I kept going deeper into the chasm, the are grew wider and wider… until I saw it. The markings on the wall.

A fragment of history long forgotten.

Within the walls were depicted titans. Strange and horrifying, alien entities standing a hundred meters tall, lording and destroying everything in their wake. As I fall down, the depictions of men fighting, struggling, grew fewer and fewer in number until there was nothing but moutains drawn.

But they weren’t actual mountains.

They were bodies, the corpses of warriors who had fought. But ultimately failed.

My feet eventually touched the ground.

And I saw skeletons around me. With a single touch of my feet, many quickly turned to dust.

I do not know them, I do not care about any of them. They are nothing but an irrelevant fragment of imagination. And yet…

A melancholy waved through my mind.

I don’t understand.

I shook my head.

“… No matter”, I spoke.

I strode steadily forth.

And suddenly, flashes of memories appeared. Memories not of my own.

A war.

They struggled, they fought against the titans. Millions were killed. Many cities burned.

I do not care.

Many families struggled, most were broken, many mothers killed their own children.

Shut up.

A world filled with nothing but madness. Betrayal was like air. To worship the titans, perhaps it would give them preferential treatment? It did not.

Enough.

Corruption. Many brothers fight on their own. Fathers fighting their sons. Mothers, ending their daughters.

“… Enough!”

I turned around. With a deep frown in my brows. What was it?

I don’t even understand.

Perhaps magic was left behind to tell a tale. But they’re speaking to the wrong person.

it matters not to me.

And eventually, I arrived at a door. A small, insignificant door. Lies beyond this is what I needed. A sword used by the second male lead. a sword capable of tearing down titans, if only it had been used for its intended purpose.

I opened the door.

But a dark sword that was supposed to be standing still on top of a pedestal was nowhere to be seen.

“… What?”, confusion striked me. But quickly, I focused on what was in front.

It was just an empty pedestal, with nothing in it… Except, embers. I decided to walk to it, but somehow, something tells me to come near. To touch it.

And before I know it, I stood right in front.

“… What are you?”, I asked. For those embers… insignificant embers amidst the ash… felt otherworldly.

As I kept staring at it… a question suddenly popped in my mind.

In the novel, the second male lead entered here to get a sword… but it is said he made a wish before obtaining it. A wish to whisper… and that whisper is…

[[What art thou seeketh?]], it whispered to me.

“… I see”, I finally understand.

“… hmm… haha”, I smiled, I giggled, and then I laughed.

That shitty novel which bears the image of this world is not a tragedy, but a comedy. The last chance to save the world, a fragment of the past, all wasted to save a single stupid girl.

I understand now.

“… This… is the ember bearing the concentrated essence of the people from the previous cycle”

All their hopes, and dreams…

[[What art thou seeketh?]], it whispred once more.

The answer is simple…

“… I seek the power to-“, and I stopped.

I don’t know why. But something feels… wrong. I don’t know.

“… I seek the power to”, but I couldn’t finish my words. As I stare deep into that ember, I am suddenly reminded of what I once were.

An enthusiastic Engineer from another world. A woman, bearing to see the world become a better place, only to die a death of no reknown.

A worthless death.

“… I… I seeketh”, and the feelings. The emotion. The anger, the betrayal, the indignance!

The MADNESS!

What I saw in the ember… what I am seeing. What I am feeling.

I saw a reflection of my own from the feelings of those that came before me.

And I felt Angry.

Angry!

I grit my teeth.

I shook my head, trying to clear the cloudiness. But the anger, the frustration, the fury, the madness, it all kept growing stronger that I couldn’t help but clutch my head.

I SHOULD HAVE KILLED THEM WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!!!

THEY SHOULD HAVE DIED! NOT ME!

BETRAYAL! I WAS TOO KIND. I KNEW FROM THE START!

DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!

“… DIE YOU PIECES OF FUCKING SHIT!”

Tears fell from my eyes as I kneeled down. A pouring rain seemed to fall from my eyes.

“… I just wanted… to make the life of everyone happy… and nice”

The memories flashed in front of my eyes.

The torture, the humiliation, the destruction of my research, and the triumph of human greed. It all painfully flashed like a ruthless fucking film.

“… I just wanted to build things… why… why is everyone so mean?”

An hour passed, and I remained there. Motionless, thinking ,feeling, analyzing… Until I eventually came to a conclusion.

This ember, the final evidence, a desperate hope of what once came before, long forgotten…

Who am I to deny their wishes?

Just like that girl laying down in a cold snow, with her blood seeping through the ground, whose dream has been denied.

Who am I to deny theirs?

And so I stood up. With hands raised forth, I placed them into the embers.

As if to have noticed my determination, the whisper asked once more.

[[What art thou seeketh?]]

I poured my mana into the ember. With what little mana this talentless body have, I poured everything in it.

“… You ask what I seek?”, I spoke. And with great determination, I whispered.

“… I seek to rekindle this flame”

And for the first time, since the dawn of era, the embers that had never flamed, that was never supposed to be kindled, were once more…

Set ablaze.

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And from the ashes, arose a being, born from the will of a billion dead souls, long forgotten and unknown to anyone that has ever existed.