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THIS REINCARNATED RIKISHI'S
NO PUSHOVER!

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Chapter 1: Sumo at Aryaka's Royal Castle

"I, First Prince of the Kingdom of Aryaka, Jonas, hereby renounce my engagement to Lady Floortje, daughter of Marquis Hobbema!"

Jonas's voice rang out across the banquet hall.

My legs buckled under me as I fell to my knees. To think I'd been denounced and cast aside by my betrothed at the graduation dance party in front of the whole magic school, a most renowned institution...

The Saint of Light, Jaromíra Šťastná, approached me with a grin.

"Oho ho ho! Look at you now, Villainess Floortje."

"I...I haven't done anything to deserve this..."

"We have witnesses. You resented me getting close to Jonas, so you sent assassins after me."

"I— I did no such thing!"

"You still intend on playing innocent? Have you no shame?!"

Slap! Jaromíra's palm struck my cheek. But as it began to hurt...



The word “sumo” flared up in me, ready to charge at my distress!

I remembered that pain in my cheek. It felt the same way as when an opponent slapped me with an open hand, a move known as *harite*. In an instant, images flashed through my mind of women, far more obese than I had ever seen before. Wearing loincloths called *mawashi*, they slapped logs to practice the aforementioned move. At that moment, it became clear to me.

In my previous life, I had been in the women’s sumo club in a Japanese university.

I...I remember now!!!

“Serves you right,” Jaromíra murmured, so no one else could hear.

I felt anger rumbling inside me. That vixen would have me executed on her fabricated charges. It was completely wrong, unjust, and plain outrageous. And I swore by the path of sumo I held so dear that I wouldn’t let it happen!

I lowered my stance, spreading my legs wide. This was not a pose one should assume while wearing a dress, but I was past the point of caring about that. For I was a stalwart sumo wrestler!

“I’ll show you a real *harite*!”

SLAP! Jaromíra lurched backwards, astonishment written across her face.

“Aaaaah!”

“Jaromíra! How dare you, Floortje!!!”

With his fist raised, Prince Jonas came charging at me. *Your center of mass is too high! You think you can force me out of the dohyō like that?!* I executed *morozashi*—a deep underarm grip—and grabbed his belt at the same time, pushing him away as if railroading him out of the ring.

“N-No way!!! H-How can a woman be so strong?!”

As I was in that moment, I had neither the weight nor the muscle required for sumo. But that isn’t what sumo really takes. What it really takes is spirit!

“Aaagh!!!”

Prince Jonas broke through the terrace railing. The man I used to call my

fiancé screamed as he fell into the dance hall below. I was victorious.

A burly man in a red ceremonial suit ascended the imperial staircase, his gait slow and steady.

“Heh heh... You’re a spicy one, Lady Floortje. I had no idea you did martial arts.”

“This is no mere martial art, Lord Clifton. Sumo is a ritual!”

“So it’s one of the divine martial arts. Fine by me. Let’s see how it fares against my Aryaka wrestling!”

“That’s the spirit! Face me with dignity!”

Lord Clifton, the son of a count, was a chivalrous man quite proud of his martial prowess.

In my previous life, I had always looked forward to playing *The Rondo of Light and Darkness* after intense sumo practice. It was a video game where you, as a female protagonist, could romance various male characters. Lord Clifton was one of these options. Jaromíra was the protagonist’s default name. And as for Prince Jonas, he was the main love interest.

It would appear I had died in my previous life and been reincarnated into the world of an otome game. But that was quite all right, for there was only one thing for me to do: keep pushing forwards on the path of sumo, fighting injustice and slaying evil. So demanded the spirit of sumo inside me!

With a loud *clunk*, Lord Clifton and I entered a struggle. It was clear his claims of prowess were not unfounded.

“Damn it—are your hands made of iron? And you call yourself a lady?”

“I’ll take that as a compliment, Lord Clifton!”

The body I’d been reincarnated into had little weight and no training at all, but it appeared some unseen forces were at play. Because I was strong, and my dress was not easy to grab. As Lord Clifton tried to get a hold of my shoulders from above, I performed *kannuki*, a double-arm lock, and threw him off-balance.

“Gah!!!”

With a perfect *uwatedashinage*, a pulling overarm throw, my opponent was sent tumbling down the stairs. *Pfft, too easy.*

“Magic! Use magic on her, Douglas!”

“Heh. I’ve got this covered, babe. But when this dance party is over, you and me are gonna...”

“S-Sure, whatever—just bring down that monster!”

Jaromíra was screaming as she addressed Lord Douglas. He, too, had been a romanceable character in the aforementioned *Rondo* game, being a distinguished wizard and the son of a count. As he began his incantation, a magical vortex formed around him. He was preparing a powerful high-level spell.

My sumo sense stirred. It was telling me to stomp my leg. This was a ritual performed to expel demons and purify the ring, and it was worth a try.

I raised my leg high. This was not a pose one should assume while wearing a dress, but I was past the point of caring about that. For at that moment I was nothing if not a *rikishi*—a sumo wrestler.

STOMP! As the sound of my foot hitting the floor echoed through the terrace, Lord Douglas’s spell dissipated.

“Wh-What?! What did you do just now?!”

“It’s called *shiko*.”

The ritual appeared to have the power to dispel magic. It was sure to come in handy in a world brimming with just that.

I pushed Lord Douglas with my torso—a technique known as *gaburi-yori*. Then I grabbed the front of his belt in a *maemitsu* grip. Finally, I tripped him with an *uchimusou*—pushing his inner thigh with my hand to destabilize it.

Following the example of Lord Clifton, our wizard tumbled down the stairs, screaming.

“Enough! *Enough*, I said! I am First Prince, and nobody dares oppose my will!”

Bruised all over, Prince Jonas was a pitiful sight as he walked back upstairs with a great many heavily armed soldiers in tow.

“Heh. You want to see my sumo that badly, Your Highness?”

“Resistance is futile, my wretched, loathsome Floortje! You will look good with a noose around your neck!”

“A noose, is it...? Why, Your Highness, you make me sick to the core.”

I looked over the troops crowding the stairs.

“W-Watch out!!! Her profession is most uncanny!!!” shouted Jaromíra from behind me.

“Have you been possessed by the devil, Floortje?! What is your profession supposed to be?! Shaman?! Dark Knight?!”

“It’s nothing like that.”

I raised a leg high in the air. This was not a pose a lady should assume, but I was past the point of caring about that. For I was...

“Whatever I was before, I am now a robust sumo wrestler!!!”

STOMP! My shiko echoed through the dance hall, demoralizing the guards with its sacred sound.

“A...A ‘sumo wrestler’?! It certainly doesn’t sound like an honorable profession! B-But not to worry, men! She’s alone! And behind her is the Saint of Light! You must not fear, and if you do, you are a traitor possessed by a demon yourself! Proceed without fear, and see to it that she does not leave this place alive!”

“Yes, sir!” exclaimed the guards in reply.

They resembled a swarm of gigantic beetles as they climbed the stairs. Had this been a short while ago, the sight could’ve made me faint from terror, but the new me wasn’t scared in the slightest. I considered attributing this development to the spirit of sumo, but that wasn’t right.

I folded my arms and smiled, because I could handle them. The guards didn’t scare me because I could crush them. Their swords and spears were powerless

against my sumo. I had complete confidence in that.

There was something in my clenched fists. When I looked, I realized I was holding salt. It must have been for purifying the ring. I wondered if some skill had caused it to manifest.

Then I heard the sound of drums from somewhere—the kind of drumming that draws local crowds to sumo matches about to begin. *Ah, so that's what's happening. This castle is hosting a professional sumo tournament!*

“Have a taste of this Purification Salt!”

I cast the salt in my hands upon the soldiers trying to climb the stairs.

“Aaagh! My eyes, my eyes!!!”

“Gaaah!!!”

Some covered their eyes while others screamed, and still others began to dissolve. Were there actual demons among the guards of the castle?

As I made my way down the crowded stairs, I threw salt with my left hand and delivered harite with my right. Screams and angry shouts followed me.

I was approaching Jonas's location. He was looking every which way, his face the very picture of fear as he barked orders at his men to take me down. What a disgrace. Truly, he was an utter disgrace. As someone in a position of power, the least he could have done was stay calm and composed. How could he even call himself a prince?

In an instant, I closed the distance between myself and the misty-eyed prince and thrust my hand at his throat—a move called *nodowa*—before lifting him up by it.

“Agghh, s-stop, damn it! I-I'm a prince—you can't do this to me!!!”

“Why did you accuse me of something I didn't do?”

“B-Because I c-can't marry Jaromíra with you in the way!”

“That's it?”

“Th-That's it! I wouldn't expect a clingy, gloomy girl like you to simply agree to break off our engagement!”

“Why did you go so far as to arrange my execution?”

Still held up by the throat, Jonas glared down at me spitefully.

“Because I hate you! You’re gloomy and wishy-washy and I don’t want to see you for another second! Just die already, would you?!”

Oh, so that’s how it is. However, his confession didn’t move me in the slightest. I was appalled at his inflexibility: he couldn’t even turn a blind eye to his future wife’s shortcomings for the sake of his kingdom.

As I threw him down into the dance hall as if I was disposing of trash, he tumbled across the floor with a rather coarse scream. By now I was surrounded by immobilized soldiers, as though I had emerged from a bloodbath on the front lines. No one was left to stand in my way.

My sumo senses were suggesting I visit the castle’s underground. *What could this be?* I crossed the dance hall, opened the door, and stepped into the hallway. Once again, I could feel it—there was, indeed, something down below. It was abundantly clear to me that someone was calling out. I made haste through the maze that was the castle hallways, relying on my newfound senses. Past a timeworn spiral staircase lay the dungeon, chilly and reeking of mold.

My path forwards was obstructed by a fair knight in full armor—a Temple Knight by the name of Ove Sörenson.

“You put me in a difficult spot, Lady Floortje. The dungeon is off-limits to you.”

This masterful swordsman and captain of the order of Temple Knights was another love interest in *The Rondo of Light and Darkness*. My sumo senses told me my objective lay behind him. And there was something else they said I should do.

“‘Open the *banzuke*’ ...?”

As soon as I had uttered the words, a table of rankings appeared before me. Most of it was in bright black ink, but my name was written in red. *Hmm... I’m still eighth in jūryō, the second-highest division?* The knight in front of me had

his name in *maegashira*, the lowest rank of the highest division, where he was fourth. It appeared I would be able to judge my opponents' strength in this way, which was quite useful.

The “west” *yokozuna*—the highest sumo rank—belonged to the captain of the royal guard. But the person holding the slightly more prestigious rank of the “east” *yokozuna* had a name I did not recognize. It seemed there were formidable opponents in this kingdom whom I was still unfamiliar with. The thought of it made my heart pound with excitement.

“What is that piece of paper?”

“Nothing you should concern yourself with.”

“All right, well—the Saint of Light ordered me to take you down if I see you. I bear no grudge against you, but in God’s name, I shall deliver you to heaven.”

“You’re a worthy opponent, Knight! Fight with honor!”

A ring appeared, complete with *tokudawara*—the four bales positioned around the outside of the ring, slightly offset from its edge. The ring rose right out of the cobblestones there in the underground passageway which led to the dungeon. *What a bizarre phenomenon.* It must’ve been another manifestation of my sumo powers.

I sensed a crucial bout coming.

“Wh-What is this? Some kind of field?” uttered Ove, puzzled by the sight in front of him.

After performing the salt-throwing ritual, I stepped into the ring.

“We’ll fight here, in the ring. The only rules are that you may not touch the ground with anything other than the soles of your feet, and that you may not leave the ring—if you do either of those things, you lose. Simple, is it not?”

“And what makes you think I would engage in such child’s play? Step out of there, Lady Floortje!”

The knight pulled out his longsword and pointed it at me. I shrugged in response. *Such a bother...* As if coming to my aid, a translucent announcer appeared.

“Wh-What?! Is that a ghost?!”

“It’s a *yobidashi*.” The yobidashi in question pointed his translucent fan at me.

“On the east, Flo-or-tje... On the west, O-ve...”

The announcer spoke in a thoroughly hoarse voice. When Ove’s name was called, he was dragged into the ring as if pulled by forces unknown.

“God almighty! How are you doing this?!”

With that, the translucent announcer vanished, replaced by a translucent *gyōji*—a referee.

“Face each other.”

Evidently still compelled to obey, my opponent stood before the *shikiri-sen*—the two starting lines—on his side of the ring. So did I.



Ove rested his weapon upon his shoulder, holding it in one hand. I could tell he was prepared to swing it down on me without hesitation.

He touched the line below him with his free hand. Our breathing synchronized. And as I charged at him and he swung his longsword down with one hand...

“*Hakkeyoi!*” shouted the gyōji, signaling the start of the bout while raising his war fan.

SLAP!

“Ngh!”

Ove groaned as I rushed him and struck his sword-wielding wrist from below with a harite. One might assume the harite of a sumo wrestler would be slow due to their large build, but it’s actually much faster than a jab in boxing. As my opponent lost his balance above the waist, I grabbed his belt with a deep underarm grip. He hurried to swing his sword, but swords aren’t much good so up close and personal.

“D-Damn it, let me go!!!”

“Still in, still in, still in...” the referee chanted.

While Ove struggled to break free, I pulled on his belt and pushed him farther and farther along. He panicked when he saw that the edge of the ring was approaching. But a panicking swordsman who doesn’t know how to stop a *yorikiri*—the name of the move I was executing—is as good as prey for a sumo wrestler. I timed his struggling with a move of my own: *sukui nage*, a beltless arm throw.

“Gaaaaah!!!” Ove rolled over one of the set-back bales and fell out of the ring.

“The winner is decided,” announced the referee, raising his fan towards me.

In an instant, both the referee and the ring disappeared.

“I win.”

“What, just because you won some game— W-Wait, what?!” It appeared Ove could not get himself back to his feet.

“Sumo is a divine ritual. Don’t expect to get another chance right away. You’ll have to wait until the next *basho*.”

“And just what is a ‘basho’ supposed to be?! What is this high-level divine martial art?!”

“Sumo.”

“‘Sumo’... I...I’ve never heard of this ceremonial divine art...” The defeated knight slumped his shoulders in dejection.

Heh, weapons won’t help you in the ring against an unarmed sumo wrestler.

I left Ove behind and made my way into the dungeon. My sumo senses led me to the deepest cell.

“Wh-Who’s there? H-Have you come to kill me...?”

A faint voice came from the darkness. Inside the cell stood a boy with cat ears, peering at me with teary eyes and paralyzed with fear.

...

.....

Is...that...

...my favorite character from my past life, Second Prince Richie?!

Despite his title, he wasn’t available as a love interest in the game, and his role amounted to sticking to the first prince’s back and speaking timidly with the protagonist every now and then. But his splendid looks and his enthralling shotaness made him immensely popular with ladies who were into that sort of thing, and there was even an urban legend that they brought down the developer’s servers with their emails asking for a Richie route because “who needs Prince Jonas anyway?” That’s just how popular Richie was.

I’m sure you’ve figured it out by now, but I was very much obsessed with him myself: I had shed tears of blood and agonized in front of my console over the fact he wasn’t available to be romanced.



And there he stood, in front of my eyes, with those fluffy cat ears of his. *Ahh, how precious!*

“♪ Haae... Let’s gather flowers and dance... ♪ Haae... January, the blessing of the flowering Adonis... ♪”

My goodness, I was just so happy to meet my favorite character that I couldn’t keep myself from singing *Hanazukushi*, a beloved *jinku* of mine. In my previous life, when sumo wrestlers felt sad, happy, or crushed by the pain of parting, they would sing a *jinku* to express their emotions.

“Your singing... It’s...beautiful... You are...Lady Floortje, correct?”

“Oh my—you remembered my name!”

“I...was watching you at the garden party held in the royal castle, since you’re so beautiful,” said the prince, blushing.

Oh gosh! That makes me so happy! Dosukoi dosukoi!

“Now, why don’t you stand back and let me get you out of there?”

“Y-You can’t. Only my brother Jonas and Jaromíra have the keys.”

“Worry not. I’ll be but a moment.”

I assumed a shallow squat and placed my hands on one of the cell’s large, load-bearing stone pillars. This was the pose for practicing *teppo*. I felt slightly uncomfortable doing this in front of my favorite prince, but I was past the point of caring about that. For I was a steadfast sumo wrestler!

Teppo! Teppo! Teppo! Thud after thud led the pillar to begin to crack. After about five strikes it finally collapsed, the iron bars all twisted, and the prince was free to go.

“W-Wow! How are you so strong, Floortje?”

“This is awkward to admit, but through a rather strange turn of events I gained the power of sumo.”

Prince Richie had stepped out of his cell and was staring at me in round-eyed wonder. *You’ll make me blush!* I could feel the next lines of that song were on their way.

“Why are you stuck down here, Your Highness?”

As he stared at me with those cute, round eyes, his cat ears twitched. I couldn't stop marveling at how precious he was. Those fluffy ears of his were awfully tempting—I wanted to stroke them over and over.

“A few days ago, Jonas brought Jaromíra to my room, and she cast a spell on me. That's how I got these cat ears,” said Prince Richie, lowering his gaze in dejection. “My brother claimed I had the cursed blood of beast-people flowing in my veins. That someone like me had no right to lay claim to the throne. I'm prepared to step aside: Jonas is an extraordinary person who excels at our royal duties. But I was shocked to hear such discrimination against the numerous beast-people residing in our nation. I can't help but expect that something bad is going to happen.”

Ah, such altruism! He was more concerned about these beast-people he had never seen than about his own potential execution. I sensed a splendid future king in him, both with my native senses and through sumo.

“You are a wonderful person, Your Highness, and don't you let them tell you otherwise. Even if you have the blood of beast-people in your veins—what of it? A person's value is determined by their love for others. I shall support your succession to the throne.”

The prince's face blossomed into a gentle smile.

“Thank you, Lady Floortje. But a conflict between princes would lead to a civil war, which would make the people suffer. If only something could set my brother back on the right path...”

From our discussion, it would seem Prince Jonas was trying to usurp the throne. He actually had less right to it than Prince Richie, because the latter had been born to the queen, while the former was the child of a concubine. I recalled that Prince Jonas's route in the game had doing away with envy as its theme. As the son of a former lowly maidservant, he was jealous of Prince Richie. And just before his heart was consumed by evil, he was saved by the saint, Jaromíra. They would then go on to support the royal family together, and that was the true end of the game.

In reality, they had apparently both had their hearts consumed by evil. So

much for Jaromíra being a saint. It was surely no coincidence that the spirit of sumo had woken inside me, for sumo wrestlers live to purge evil and bring smiles to the faces of the virtuous.

“Your Highness, I may have been summoned here to make you king.”

“B-By whom?”

“The god of sumo.”

“I-I haven’t heard of such a god—is it a benevolent one?”

“He puts smiles on people’s faces and makes sure everyone lives a happy life.”

“That...would make him good... I...I want to lead a happy life...with everyone...again...”

Tears began to spill from the prince’s round eyes and stream down his plump cheeks. Eager to stop them, I hugged the boy without thinking. He sobbed against my chest for a good while—after all, he was only twelve. *Ahh, these fluffy ears... Such bliss.*

“Your Highness, where might one feast one’s eyes upon King Arvi? I hadn’t the opportunity to do so at the graduation dance party.”

“I-I don’t know. I’ve been imprisoned down here for three days now.”

“The king is being held at Fort Varian,” said Ove, who had shown up, dragging his feet.

He made his way to where we stood and fell to his knees in front of Prince Richie, who quickly assumed a dignified bearing, befitting royalty. His cat ears pricked up too.

“Why are you telling me that, Knight?”

“I don’t know, Your Highness. My head simply cleared up when I lost at ‘sumo.’ I deeply apologize for playing a part in your confinement and will accept any punishment you deem necessary.”

“You are forgiven. The temple needs master swordsmen like you.”

“Ah, you are too kind, Your Highness. How could I have done this to such a

wise prince...?” Shoulders drooping, Ove shed a tear. He appeared to have regained his sanity.

“Don’t cry, Knight. You’ll make me sad too.”

“Tell me, Sir Ove, who is holding the king captive?” I asked.

“Prince Jonas. Saint Jaromíra commanded our order of Temple Knights to kidnap the king and confine him at Fort Varian.”

“That is grave news. I must rescue my father immediately.”

“Indeed, and we’ll need troops. Let us leave the castle for now, Your Highness, and pay a visit to the Hobbema marquisate,” I suggested.

“Very well. We shall gather our forces there. I’m counting on you, Floortje.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“What do you intend to do, Ove?” asked the prince.

The knight bowed his head low.

“I am captain of the Temple Knight order. I shall return to the temple and investigate Saint Jaromíra’s actions.”

“What if you find that she’s mistaken?” questioned the prince.

“Then I’ll...” His rage was palpable. “I’ll behead her.”

“You have my permission, Knight. I leave the matter of the temple to you.”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

That’s my Prince Richie! Being cute, he always looked sort of soft and unreliable, but when push came to shove, he was most certainly royalty and you could count on him. That gap was what made him so incredibly precious.
Dosukoi dosukoi!

The prince and I parted with Ove and took our leave of the dungeon. Our destination was the castle gate, where my maid Adela was supposed to be waiting with a coach. We would ride this coach to reach my lands, raise an army, and rescue the king. “Bring down that tyrannical sham of a saint,” whispered the sumo spirit in me.

The two of us were walking through the castle. Its luxurious furnishings and otherworldly splendor did little to hide the disquiet now hanging in the air. It was the sort of feeling you would expect to get while walking through a criminal part of town.

“What became of your escorts and servants, Your Highness?”

“I don’t know. Ever since my brother shoved me into that cell three days ago, I haven’t heard a word from them...”

My Adela was quite capable despite her frivolous appearance, but I doubted someone of her class should be attending to a prince. It would seem I’d need to talk to the head maid at my castle.

We passed by guards on our way now and then, but they must’ve heard what had transpired earlier because they immediately turned and ran at the sight of us. It seemed we wouldn’t encounter any difficulties in leaving the castle. Descending to the ground floor and navigating the hallways, we headed for the main entrance.

Outside, the sky was completely dark. The graduation dance party had started at six o’clock, and it must’ve been eight by now. When I had come here earlier, I ruefully wondered how I could amend my relationship with my fiancé, who had felt distant recently. Truth be told, I even felt like crying. But now here I was, without a worry in the world and not going through anything except my delightful journey with my beloved Prince Richie. Life was just like sumo, I thought. Everything could change in an instant.

“Haa... Ask not of me to bloom as the peony doth... ♪ Like cherry blossom thou wilt ask me to fall... ♪”

“That’s a nice song. It sounds like something you live by, Floortje.”

“You’re making me blush, Your Highness.”

I couldn’t keep myself from singing another sumo jinku. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“The moon is beautiful, isn’t it?” uttered the prince, seeing it show its face from behind the castle spire.

His words left me flustered. Don’t get the wrong idea, though—this world

never knew a certain famous novelist who wrote about cats, so there was no deeper meaning to the prince's words. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

Clap clap clap clap! With the rapid sound of wooden clappers, the table of rankings opened before me, unprompted. It had stretched in the middle to fit a window with red borders containing an alert written in sumo calligraphy. *A strong opponent has appeared (rank: komusubi)!* This was Yustin Suvorov of Palmero City. His name flashed in red near the top of the table, on the "west" side: *komusubi* was the fourth highest rank.

On the path to the gate stood two colossal men. One of them was Lord Clifton, grinning at me. Next to him was a noticeably larger man who was quite muscular. This must have been Yustin.

"Hey there, Lady Floortje. That little scrap we had was pretty fun. I just had to bring my master here so he could get a taste."

Yustin stared at me with cold, appraising eyes. If he was Lord Clifton's master, then he must've been an instructor of Aryaka wrestling. Any hoodlums who got a look at that splendid body of his were sure to instantly disperse.

"The name's Yustin Suvorov. I strive to be the best wrestler there is... Hey, apprentice, how'd you lose to a girl like this anyway? You must've been careless, 'cause I mean, just look at her—she's got neither weight nor muscle."

"You'd be surprised, Master. Just try fighting her yourself."

"Eh, I'll pass. Don't see the point in fighting some girl."

"Master!"

"I mean, come on, she's cute and all. And I've made it a point ever since I was little to never hurt a girl."

This Yustin seemed like a decent fellow.

"Um, Lord Clifton, we need to leave. Could you let us through that gate?"

"No. My master will make sure you don't leave."

"Eh, what did they do, anyway? Come on, let's let 'em through, all right?"

“Stop them or I’m not paying you this month’s tuition!”

“Fine...” grumbled Yustin as he began to walk towards us. “Look, I’ll give you a light slap and then you quit all of this, okay, miss?”

“That’s a no.”

Yustin’s eyes opened wide in shock.

“Come on... Don’t make me do this...”

“I’m a stalwart sumo wrestler. You think a little pain would make me surrender? That’s an insult to rikishi everywhere.”

“A...Aha ha ha! My bad, my bad. I see you’re a proper warrior. My mistake, then.”

Those muscles exuded an impressive pressure as their owner came closer. Our builds were about as different as those of an adult and a little girl.

“So you won’t let me through unless I beat you.”

“Yeah. That guy pays my salary, so don’t hold it against me, all right?”

Yustin was enormous, but his eyes were cute. An unsophisticated giant like him was fine in my book.

“Then let’s fight. I’m afraid you’ll have to follow my rules, though.”

“Have it your way. I won’t lose no matter what the rules are.”

“Come forth, dohyō!”

A splendid dohyō broke through the stone pavement from below and rose up, complete with steps for climbing it. Perhaps sumo spells had earth as their attribute, because that felt quite similar to holy-type magic granted by the earth goddess.

“Now this is quite the ring... How bizarre.”

“We’ll fight on top of this. Two rules: you lose if you touch the ground with anything but the soles of your feet, and you lose if you step outside the ring.”

“That’s pretty simple. No holding down or pinning, right?”

“No.”

Punching and kicking should've been off-limits too, but apparently sumo used to be a type of mixed martial arts back in ancient times. As seen in the episode of Nomi no Sukune's life written in *Chronicles of Japan*, the man who would later be regarded as the founder of sumo wrestling traded kicks with Taima no Kehaya until he won by breaking his back. Evidently that sort of thing was acceptable back then. It was only recently that throwing techniques seemed to have become the focus. I didn't know what historical age this universe's god of sumo had come from, but seeing how he hadn't disqualified Ove for using a sword, it appeared that wielding weapons, kicking, and using your fists were all fair game.

The wooden clappers rang again, and a number of translucent people with banners started walking in a circle around the outside of the ring.

"Wh-What?! Are these ghosts?!"

"Calm down—they're just sponsorships. Sponsors give prize money, all of which goes to the winner."

Looking closely, I spotted banners for companies like Natori, Kibun, Nagatanien, and many others I'd seen on television. Just where was all this money coming from?

"This seems a little overblown for a holy-type duelist martial art..."

"That's how sumo is."

A translucent announcer opened his folding fan and pointed it east, then west.

"Ooon thee eeeast, Yuuustiin, Yuuustiin... Ooon thee weeast, Flooortje, Flooortje..."

I climbed up, grabbed a handful of salt, and tossed it over the ring.

"So I have to take that and throw it? What *is* that, anyway?"

"Salt. It purifies the ring and also keeps your hands from getting slippery."

"Sounds good," said Yustin as he took a handful of salt, threw some over the ring, and rubbed the rest into his hands.

With my back towards him, I raised and stomped my leg, extended an arm to

each side, and displayed the palms of my hands.

“What’s with that pose of yours?”

“It shows you aren’t carrying weapons in either hand.”

“Ah—a ritual. I suppose this will buff us?”

“That’s right.”

Yustin mirrored my movements, displaying the palms of his hands as he performed shiko. Even if he didn’t really understand what he was doing, his respect for rituals was certainly commendable. No wonder he had such a high rank.

“When do we start?”

“We face each other across the lines in the ground, and when our breathing synchronizes and we both touch the ground with at least one fist at the same time, we get up and the bout starts.”

“Got it. Wow, this is really something.”

A translucent referee entered the ring. *Hey, I think I’ve seen this one on TV!* Where had all these fakes come from?

Yustin bent his knees on his side of the shikiri-sen.

“What’s your name, miss?”

“Floortje.”

“I can see from all these rituals that I completely underestimated you. You are much more of a warrior than I thought,” said Yustin with a fierce smile on his face. “So I won’t pull any punches. I’ll use Aryaka wrestling to its fullest extent to win against a true warrior like yourself. It would be rude of me not to.”

“Heh. Give it all you’ve got. You’re a worthy opponent.”

“Face each other,” said the referee.

I could feel the threatening aura emanating from across the arena. *Ah... Ah... Such ferocity, such passion!!!* The joy of having met a strong opponent made the sumo spirit in me shine bright as a star. Yustin and I touched the ground with our fists almost simultaneously, and rose up again at the same time.

“Hakkeyoi!” shouted the referee.

The bout was on. My opponent began by swinging his fist at me. *Heh—a “light slap,” was it?* If that all-out punch were to hit me, my skull would shatter and I would have to search the floor for my jaw. I found that I was already enjoying this. My opponent wasn’t holding back. And he’d gone for an immediate strike on the initial charge—a mistake I would punish him for!

I transferred my center of mass so low that my hair was sweeping the ground and took a step forward. As the sound of Yustin’s thrust whooshed over me, I slipped under him and headbutted his massive chest. A thoroughly unladylike *WHAM!* rang from the collision.

“Kgh... S-Such strength...!”

As Yustin struggled to recover from being caught off guard, I executed a deep underarm grip and grabbed his belt. I pulled him close to myself and began to push...and push farther, and push some more. It felt like shoving an enormous boulder down a road as Yustin, still standing upright, began to move backwards ever so slowly.

“Ggh! Nghhh! Yeah—no wonder my boy lost to you! This is really something!”

“See, I told you! She’s your kinda girl, right?!” shouted Lord Clifton.

“Is she overbuffed by holy magic or what?! This isn’t the strength of a lady—and her technique is unbelievable too!”

I said nothing in response, and simply kept pushing that mountain of a body.

“But you know...reality isn’t quite so pleasant.” Yustin lowered his bearing, putting an end to my advance. “You’re light and you have no muscle. This is simple physics.” As he seized the top of my dress in a firm overarm grip, his strength felt superhuman. “Buff yourself all you want, but it won’t make you heavier.”

I lowered my center of mass and resisted his advance. The pressure was overwhelming. My high heels slipped along the ground bit by bit. If only I had my weight from my past life, or my muscles... I couldn’t help wishing for such things. Had it been reckless for someone with such a weak body to challenge someone like him?

As we shuffled past the lines in the ground, I tripped his leg that was closest to me with my own.

“Kgh— You use your legs too, huh?”

Yustin wobbled for a moment, but his center of mass was so low it wasn’t enough to make him fall. He really had talent for bouts: no wonder his rank was komusubi in this kingdom. He was strong, overwhelmingly so. And heavy.

I could see the edge of the ring creeping ever closer in my peripheral vision. This was bad. Was I to lose, completely inept? Was I powerless in the face of physics? Was the sumo spirit in me all a sham? Was the memory of my past life the mere delusion of a pitiful gloomy girl who was made out to be the villainess?

My body ground against my opponent’s, producing heat as he pushed and I resisted. Sweat trickled down my forehead and cheeks.

“I wish you had as much weight and muscle as me so we could have a proper fight. But what can you do? This is why professional sports have weight categories!”

He pushed farther. I struggled to hold my ground.

“Still in, still in, still in!” shouted the referee, swinging his war fan around.

Was sumo to lose to Aryaka wrestling? Right here on the dohyō? That could not be allowed to happen. But the *physics* ahead kept pushing me with his mass. *Bear with it, bear with it!*

What would happen to Prince Richie if I were to lose? Only one thing: he would die. Jaromíra wouldn’t tolerate his escape. Originally she had planned to let him live until Prince Jonas succeeded the throne, but now that was no longer an option. The sweet cat-eared prince with the most gorgeous bashful smile, the prince whom I loved so much, would be executed by Jaromíra.

“Show him, Floortje!!!”

The cheering of my favorite cat-eared prince found its way deep into my soul. In an instant, the spirit of sumo in me was revitalized.

“Wh-What?! Where did you get this strength?!”

That’s right—there was a reason I couldn’t afford to lose! Who cares about physics? Who cares about weight? Who cares about muscle?!

“You think I would do sumo if I were scared of physics?!”

“Whaaat?!”

The spirit of sumo within me was in full swing, radiant as it summoned limitless energy. At last, I was able to halt Yustin’s advance. *More! Fire those engines harder, for I need more power!* I pushed my opponent with all the strength I could muster. The spirit of sumo was a charging boar by nature; it didn’t have time to look back or dwell on the past!

“Damn it—that’s impossible! Physically impossible!”

“Nothing is impossible for a sumo wrestler!!!”

“Still in, still in, still in!”

I managed to push Yustin back to the lines in the center of the ring. My sweat mixed with his.

“Shit! Shit, shit, *shit!* You’re a hell of a fighter, Floortje!”

“You too, Yustin!”

“You can do it, Floortje!”

“Put your back into it, Master!”

It was only then that I realized the ring was surrounded with people. Some of the guards, maids, gardeners, and other commoners were cheering for me, while still others cheered for Yustin.

“This is fun! Wouldn’t you agree?” asked Yustin.

“It very much is!”

As we attempted to use throwing techniques or to knock one another off-balance, the two of us were smiling at each other. It felt great. *This* was sumo.

“Ha ha ha! All right, Floortje, I’m done seeing you as a lady! You’re a savage beast, that’s what you are!”

“Why, thank you!”

As the two of us stood tangled together, Yustin attempted a kick. *Heh*. Twisting my body and pushing myself forward, I grabbed him by the thigh. Feet are fast, but it takes time for thighs to move with them.

“Agh!”

Sumo wrestlers specialize in fighting as close as one can physically get to one’s opponent, and yet Yustin thought a kick would work against someone like that?! I put strength into my arms to try and bring him to the ground, but he managed to nimbly slip out of my grip. His rank really wasn’t just for show: he was dexterous too.

We grappled more. We tried to throw one another off-balance. Pushing and pulling, zigzagging across the lines in the center. Just two people in the ring, crashing into each other, getting hot and sweaty together. Yet there was nothing erotic about it thanks to the emotions which radiated from us, the combatants: rage and ferocity, grit and persistence, admiration and respect. We smiled like tigers as we savagely crashed into each other again and again.

And then I remembered my friend from my past life, Micchan, who’d told me about this technique she came up with.

“Wouldn’t it be amazing if you used that?”

It was so amazing I’d never managed to pull it off, but perhaps now was the time! There, in that moment, when my sumo spirit was in full swing and I fought with every part of my body in perfect harmony, I could just see myself unleashing that dreamlike technique.

I latched onto Yustin’s belt and pulled.

“Kgh?!”

Fast as lightning, my knee entered the space between his legs. I felt...electricity? *Bzzt*. I pulled my opponent onto my leg while simultaneously raising it. *Bzzzz*. Tiny yellow sparks began to fly off my body.

“Agh! What is this, an electric attack?! I feel numb!”

Bzzzzzzzzzz! The electrical discharge seemed to be getting stronger. To complete the move, I twisted as hard as I could to shake my opponent at the speed of lightning, before sending him thundering to the ground like a lightning strike. As he fell to the ring, a characteristic thunder rumbled through the surroundings along with an explosion of yellow light.

“Gaaaaah!!!” screamed Yustin as he fell headfirst down onto the ring, then rolled off it entirely.

My Lightning Inner-Thigh Throw had worked! Back in my previous life, it had been imagined as a lightning-fast inner-thigh throw, but somehow in this world it appeared to have gained the affinity of lightning. Mysterious are the ways of sumo.

“Floooortjeee...” spoke the referee as he pointed his fan at me to declare me victorious.

The audience erupted in cheers.

“Floortje! Floortje!!! You were amazing!”

“Thank you, Your Highness.”

The prince had climbed the dohyō and rushed to embrace me. It was both joyful and ticklish. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

As the referee brought the prize money out on his war fan, I performed the ceremonial *tegatana*—making slicing motions with my hands—and accepted it. The envelopes vanished once I touched them, leaving behind only golden coins and a single vial.

“Wow, gold! And is that a magic potion?” asked the prince.

I uncorked the vial and gave it a sniff.

“It’s pomade,” I replied.

“What is it for?”

“Dressing one’s hair.”

An appropriate prize for a sumo tournament. Being a woman, I wasn’t about

to tie my hair into a topknot, but I liked the idea of giving Prince Richie a ginkgo-leaf topknot, which was the hairstyle worn in tournaments by members of the top two sumo divisions. A topknot and cat ears. *How precious. Dosukoi dosukoi!*

As the referee disappeared, the ring, too, began to bury itself back underground. With that, the servants and soldiers who moments ago had been so excited about the bout started to disperse, looking awkward. Soon enough, the dohyō was completely gone, and the only ones left on that path lit by magic lanterns were me, the prince, the unconscious Yustin, and Lord Clifton.

“Wow. Just...wow, Floortje.”

With a satisfied smile on his face, Lord Clifton dragged his giant of a master out of our way, opening the path to the gate.

“Thank you.”

“Can we fight you again? Me, and my master as well.”

“See you at the next tournament.”

With that, the prince and I passed through the gate.

“Milady!!!” shouted my ditzy maid Adela, who was leaning out of the window of the coach as it made its way to us.

“The castle is sooo weird, let’s get out of here quick—oh my, who’s this?! Ah, what a lovely handsome boy! I’m Adela, Miss Floortje’s personal maid, omigosh, your ears?! You have cat ears, like, wow, how precious!”

“N-Nice to meet you, Adela. My name is Richie.”

“Oh my, oh my!!! You’re Prince Richie!!! Oh dear, oh gosh!”

“Control yourself, Adela. And open the door for us already.”

“Yes, milady!”

My maid truly was a ditz. I entertained the idea of pulling a forwards force-down on her as I waited to follow the prince into the coach.

Then some silhouettes on the castle balcony caught my eye. One of them had a powerful, ever-growing presence.

It was the captain of the royal guard, Erhard Blon... He who held the highest rank in the Kingdom of Aryaka. I knew I would be facing him one day. But not today. Until that time came, I would need to train my mind and body, practice my techniques, grow some muscle, and put on some weight. *See you at this castle next tournament, Erhard!* With that thought, I climbed aboard the coach.

“Um, are we going to your residence nearby?” asked Adela.

“No. Let us head to my lands, where we will raise an army.”

“Huh? Whaaaaat?! Wh-Why?! Are you planning a coup?”

“Not at all,” said I with a broad smile. “This will be a provincial tour for exhibition matches, all to make Prince Richie here the next king!”

“I don’t really get it, milady...”

The prince giggled. As Adela leaned out the window and gave directions to the coachman, I heard drumming from somewhere. The kind you would hear at the end of a tournament day, inviting spectators to return tomorrow. With a full moon and a sky full of stars overhead, our coach raced through the night, accompanied by the sound of drums, heading straight for the Hobbema marquisate.

Interlude: Overlooking the Path to the Gate, from atop the Balcony at Aryaka's Royal Castle

"They're getting away, they're getting away! Why oh why didn't I kill the prince sooner?!"

Jaromíra's voice echoed across the balcony. With bloodshot eyes, she pounded the railing with her hands, looking like an enraged demon.

"B-But it was you who said we should hold off until after the coronation," replied Prince Jonas, who looked rather haggard, covered in bruises and with messy hair.

"We were supposed to execute Richie on the night of the coronation and then follow up with killing Floortje on false charges! Why has this happened?! Just where did this 'sumo' profession come from?! This is impossible!" Jaromíra was vigorously tearing at her neatly set hair. "We...we need to kill them, right now, or it'll be over for us—we'll be the ones who end up under the guillotine, Jonas!!!"

"I-I know! I'm well aware of that. We'll have General Maurilio assemble our troops at sunrise and send them after those two. I-It'll be fine! We can kill them."

"NOW! Do it right now! Ove!!! Where is Ove?!"

A priest standing in the back of the room raised his head.

"Captain Ove returned to the temple after suffering an injury at the hands of Lady Floortje."

"Well, then just give me anyone!!! Anyone who can notify the Temple Knight order that Prince Richie has been kidnapped by that demon Floortje! Send troops after her at once and have her arrested!"

The priest looked away.

"Half of the Temple Knights are stationed at Fort Varian. There aren't many

who can be deployed right now...”

“God damn it!!! Why can’t we just send them?! Useless, all of you!!!”

The balcony’s glass door opened and a colossally built man stepped through. It was Count Erhard Blon, captain of the Aryakan royal guard.

“What’s the matter, my lovely saint? Something troubling you?”

“Erhard! Quick, go after those two and kill them!”

Erhard squinted at the retreating coach.

“Hold on, Jaromíra—would a captain of the royal guard win at that ‘sumo’?” asked Prince Jonas.

“Rgh!”

“I shall. ’Tis mere child’s play, is it not?”

“There’s some holy-type magic involved. Even with a sword, Ove couldn’t beat her!”

Erhard roared with laughter.

“I shan’t use a sword, or my fists like Yustin. I’ll bring daggers. One in each hand should do the trick.”

“Daggers?”

“It looks like this ‘sumo’ is all about fighting up close and personal. And that’s just what daggers are designed for.”

“True... I suppose you would be able to stab her even while grappling,” agreed Prince Jonas.

“All right, then. Captain, I order you to go after those insurgents at once and cut them down!”

“W-Wait! What if he loses?”

“W-Well, uh...”

“If the captain of the royal guard somehow manages to lose, we’re done for!”

“You can’t know that!”

Erhard watched the quarreling pair with a soft expression on his face.

“Good grief... How it saddens me to see such small-minded people,” he whispered, casting his gaze upon the coach in the distance. “First you bring in the Saint of Light—now it’s the Saint of Sumo? You’re surprisingly unrelenting, Goddess.” Erhard chuckled to himself. “But they’re still small fry. I’d like to fatten them up some more before the feast.”

The captain of the royal guard adjusted his gloves to hide the scales on his wrists.

“The dark realm of despair beneath my reign draws ever closer...” Erhard chuckled in delight.

Enveloped in bright moonlight, the four stood on the balcony together.

Chapter 2: Sumo at the Hobbema Marquisate

After four hours in a coach, we arrived at a village where we were to stay at an inn. The kitchen had closed by then, but we were told we could use any ingredients we wanted. Carrots, potatoes, onions, pheasant, cabbages, mushrooms... *Hmm*. This was the world of a game for women, and as such, many of the vegetables found here were the same as the ones I was used to from my past life. For seasoning, there was only sugar and sesame seeds—had we been in the capital, we could've gone to get miso and sauce, but here in the village we would just have to do without.

"Milady, you've never cooked, have you? Milady, why are you staring at the ingredients? Just let your trusty Adela handle everything for you!"

"No, I'll do the cooking today."

"But you've never so much as peeled a vegetable... Oh, you're already peeling one, and wow, you're so good at it!"

Settle down, my ditzy maid, before you learn the hard way just how wide we stretch our legs during training.

"When did you learn to cook? That's not fair! You're making me lose my purpose in life... So, what are you cooking? It has to be stew with all this, right?"

"It's *chanko*."

"What's chanko? Is it tasty? Where is it from? How do you make it?"

"Peel the potatoes for me, would you?"

"Yes, miladyyy," she trilled.

The word "chanko" describes more than a single kind of dish. It's a general term for the types of meals sumo wrestlers eat at stables. So even if I made a curry, it would still be considered chanko. But in general, the term refers to a pot of meat or seafood with vegetables in soup stock.

I had a strong desire to treat my beloved prince to chanko. He must have

been starving after spending three days in a dungeon.

“W-Wait, milady—the owner did say we can use any ingredients we want, but aren’t you making too much here? Oh dear, it’s a common beginner’s mistake to make too much. Let’s steam these peeled potatoes and take them with us to eat later, okay, okay?”

“What are you talking about? I can eat all of this, Adela.”

“Huh?”

“I’d be glad if the prince helped himself to this too, but I really need to put on weight and grow some muscle.”

Adela clung to my shoulder with teary eyes. What was this about?

“M-Miladyyy, don’t scare me like thaaat, I can’t bear to watch you grow ugly with lots of fat and muscleee, you look best the way you do nooow, you don’t need more weeeight, please stay your beautiful self foreeeever...”

“To keep winning bouts, I need to be strong and heavy. I’m going to put on weight and train.”

“Nooooo! Waah, waaah! I can’t stand seeing you lose your beauty, waaaah!”

Be quiet, you ditz, before I teach you what a bell hammer backwards body drop is.

“What happened? Why is Adela crying?”

“Waaah, Your Highness! Milady wants to get super fat and grow muscleee!”

“That’s, uh...”

With upturned eyes, the prince stole glances at me. *How precious. Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Is that true, Floortje? Are you putting on weight?”

“It gives one an advantage in sumo bouts.”

“N-No, you can’t put on weight, you can’t...”

He looked ready to cry as well as he tugged at my sleeve. *Ahhhh, how precious!* Even the way his ears twitched seemed doleful. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“E-Even if you don’t want me to, I have to grow heavy and strong so I never lose to anyone.”

“You can’t, Floortje... I like how pretty you are.”

Oh dear. Oh dear, oh dear. My heart couldn’t take this. The cat-eared prince was too powerful. Too lustrous. I sensed a nosebleed on the way. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“A-Anyway, the chanko’s ready, so let’s eat. You must be hungry, Your Highness.”

“Yes, they only gave me water and hardtack. I’m famished.”

Okay—next time I see Prince Jonas and Jaromíra, I’m beating them to death. I made up my mind after learning how they had treated my sweet prince.

I wanted him to eat a lot and grow big. But not too big: I would cry if he became a bruiser like Yustin.

The chanko was ready, so I placed the pot on the table. *Mm, smells good.* It was a salt chanko, but with the chicken broth and fresh vegetables it promised to be delicious.

“Wow, oh wow, is this stew?”

“It’s chanko.”

“Shall I fill your bowl? Ah, there’s so much...”

“Please do, Adela.”

Usually, you were supposed to take your portion directly from the pot, with chopsticks. Too bad I didn’t have any. We would just have to eat it like it was stew.

“This is great, Floortje! Wow, I’ve never had anything like this.”

“Wow, it’s so good, when did you get this good at cooking, milady? I’ve never seen you set foot into the kitchen at your residence in the capital.”

Nom nom. The potatoes tasted surprisingly good. The chicken broth was thick and mixed well with the vegetables. Evidently, the ingredients in this world were quality. The prince asked for seconds several times. Adela ate a lot. And I

did my best...

But there was still some chanko left. In my past life, I would finish meals like these all on my own. Yet this new body of mine couldn't handle as much. I recalled Floortje's in-game dinner scenes from before she awakened to sumo: she ate like a bird.

"You ate so much, milady. I never thought you would manage."

"There's still some left. Let's finish it in the morning," suggested the prince.

Chanko doesn't taste very good when reheated. I wondered what we should do with it.

"Give that to us!"

Oh. You're... Drenched in sweat, Yustin and Lord Clifton burst into the inn.

"What gives, you two?"

"We ran all this way after you, so we're pretty hungry. Mind if we eat that?" Yustin pleaded gravely.

"Help yourselves. It's only leftovers, but I'm glad to have someone finish it."

"Much appreciated. Whoa, this smells good! My stomach can barely wait!"

Lord Clifton hurried to take his seat at the table and began to wolf down the bowl Adela handed him.

"This is great, seriously. What is this? I've never had this before, but it's great, right, Master?"

"Ah, such flavor... The sweetness of onions and carrots mixed together, the chicken broth, the mushroom broth, all in perfect harmony: truly a heavenly meal." Yustin appeared to be a gourmet.

"Milady made this. She says it's called 'chanko.' It's not every day you get to have something like this. So, anyone want seconds?"

The two men ate like gluttons. They demolished our leftovers in no time and then began munching on some bread.

"So, why did you two run after us?"

Still sitting in his chair, Yustin straightened up and bowed to me.

“Take us under your wing! Me and my apprentice here.”

“Please, Floortje. We’re fascinated with ‘sumo,’ and we want to learn its ways.”

“It’s stronger and more wondrous than Aryaka wrestling. We’d be so glad to learn from you!”

They wanted me to teach them? *Hmm...*

“How rude! Milady doesn’t do martial arts. What is this weird ‘sumo,’ anyway? Why, it must be about half-naked gentlemen grappling in naughty ways!”

“You’re mostly right, Adela.”

“Huh?”

I rose from my seat.

“Very well, I shall teach you. Then you are both to call me Coach.”

“‘Coach,’ huh...? Well, you got it...Coach.”

“Thank you, Coach. I shall fully devote myself to the pursuit of sumo.”

Even the way they reacted to what I’d said seemed to reflect the difference in their ranks.

“Teach me too, Coach!”

“You too, Your Highness? I must warn you, the training is rigorous.”

“I’m prepared. I’ll train and beat up bad guys like you did earlier!”

Before I knew it, I was smiling and rubbing the prince’s head.

“All right, I’ll teach you too. But your status is higher than mine, so just call me by name, as usual.”

“Okay, Floortje! Wahey!” Prince Richie was jumping with joy.

“My status is pretty high too—can I call you by name?”

“Don’t even think about it, apprentice.”

“Whaaat?!”

Adela was watching me with a deeply furrowed brow.

“What are you starting here, milady? Some kind of religion? You can’t do that—there’s no freedom of association in Aryaka. The soldiers will come for you.”

“Don’t worry, it’s not an association. Sumo stables are like sports groups.”

“What are these ‘sumo stables,’ anyway?”

“They’re clans, as it were.”

A clan was a group of adventurers, bigger than a party. You’d have some sort of headquarters, which would assist parties composed of the clan’s members.

“So it’s a Floortje stable clan...okay. Do I have to be part of it?”

“You’re my maid, so of course.”

“Whaaat?! No way, I don’t want to grapple with half-naked men!!! I’m not even married!!!”

“I’m not saying you have to train. Just do the chores, that’s all I ask.”

What are you babbling about, you ditz, you want to know what a body drop throw is?

“Oh, that’s what you meant. That’s fine, then.”

“Now then, tomorrow we will need four cotton fabrics—each six meters long, forty-five centimeters wide, and folded into four layers. Can you procure that for us?”

“Huh? Wh-What do you need such long fabrics for?”

“To make mawashi for everyone.”

“‘Mawashi’?”

She would see for herself the following day. I only hoped the cotton would be sturdy enough.

“Oh, and also, Prince Jonas is gathering troops to send after you, Coach,” spoke Yustin.

“Oh yeah, I heard that too. Ten thousand troops, they said. What’s the plan,

uh...Coach?"

"Ten thousand, is it...?"

"Wh-What are we going to do, Floortje?"

The prince was shaking. So were his ears. *How precious. Dosukoi dosukoi!*

"I'll face them head-on. Sumo has its secrets for facing multiple opponents at once."

"Heh, that's why you're the, uh...the coach."

"But isn't sumo based around fighting in close quarters? What's the plan?"

"Let's flee! Let's flee, milady, we can't possibly face ten thousand troops! Dépêchez-vous!"

Silence, you ditz, or the first technique I show my new students will be a hooking backwards counter throw.

"Worry not. I know what to do. Leave it to your coach."

"That's reassuring."

"You really are something, Coach."

"So it'll be fine? I trust you, Floortje."

"Let's flee..."

You be quiet, Adela.

"I hereby declare the Floortje stable open!"

As I stood up and made this announcement, five objects came falling from above.

"What's this?"

"It may be dangerous! Stand back, Coach!"

"What's going on?"

I took a closer look, only to discover that it was five mawashi—sumo loincloths—of different colors. One of the perks of making a clan, perhaps? I

gave the red one to Yustin, the blue one to Lord Clifton, the short yellow one was clearly for Prince Richie, Adela got the purple one, and the black one I took for myself.

“In sumo, this is the only thing you have on you when you fight.”

“So this is a mawashi...”

“W-Wait—so you have to be completely naked except for this loincloth?”

“Quiet, apprentice. Wrestling was originally done with your thing hanging out for everyone to see.”

“But that’s...”

“Wow, I’m so glad we’re a team now!”

“Great news, isn’t it, Your Highness?”

“It is, Yustin!”

Adela was looking at me with her eyes narrowed.

“I. Don’t. Want. This. Thing!”

“Odd-jobbers don’t really need it.”

The maid was relieved to hear that. Moments later, the purple mawashi disappeared.

“Ah, my loincloth...”

Instead, a *happi*—a traditional tube-sleeved Japanese coat—appeared out of thin air, landing on Adela’s shoulders.

“Wow, a coat! This texture is so nice, I love it.”

Seeing the back of the cream-colored coat read “Natori,” the name of a company sponsor, I could barely contain my laughter. It appeared Adela was recognized as a yobidashi—whose duties go beyond being the announcers who merely call the fighters’ names before bouts.

I took a shower and lay down on my bed, thinking about what an eventful day it had been. I could never have imagined I would recall my past life after getting

slapped by Jaromíra. And to think sumo harbored such power... It was more magical than the sumo I used to know, and all the stronger for it. There was no RPG element to *The Rondo of Light and Darkness* to begin with, so with this whole sumo system just shoved in, some parts of it didn't seem to be working the way they should have. I merely hoped the world wouldn't decide to break down entirely.

I got up when there was a knock on the door.

"Yes?"

"Are you awake, Floortje?"

It was Prince Richie. What had brought him here so late at night? I opened the door. Seeing him on the verge of tears, I squatted down to his height.

"What happened?"

"Oh, thank goodness, you're still here."

"I am."

"Yes... I'm so glad it wasn't all just a dream I had in the dungeon."

Smiling, I patted his head. He had been through some scary things recently. Imprisoned by his brother, his own flesh and blood, and that vixen Jaromíra.

"Do you want to sleep together, Your Highness?"

"Oh, but... I'm a boy, so sleeping with a lady would be, you know..."

I gave the prince a gentle hug. The smell of his ears made me feel warm inside.

"The white snow of Mount Fuji... ♪ melts in the sun... The heart of a girl with shimada hair... ♪ melts in love..."

Before I knew it, a bit of an amorous jinku had come out. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

"That's a beautiful song." The prince paused for a moment. "Do you think someone will laugh at me tomorrow?"

"I'll treat any ditzy maids who dare laugh at you to a backwards force down."

“Ah ha ha! Don’t be too harsh on Adela.”

“It’s only tough love.”

I picked the prince up in a princess carry and laid him on the bed. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

Now then, tonight was the night. A crucial bout for the title of yokozuna, the grand champion, held right here on top of this bed. And I would be tonight’s temptress. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* Or so I thought...before I realized the prince was already soundly asleep. He must’ve been pretty tired. I fixed his hair and lay beside him. *Ah, he’s so warm. Children really do have high body temperatures.* I slept holding the prince close to me. The Grand Night Sumo, being a temptress...that could all wait. For the time being, we needed to sleep and recover our strength. *He’s so warm.*

“Ahh!”

I woke up to Adela’s little shriek and got out of the bed in an instant. She fled the room without looking at me, so naturally I chased after her. She kept running and running: down the stairs, through the dining room, and almost all the way to the well. There, she finally faced me.

“Ah, milady!!! Congratulations on your success! Now if you get lucky on your first try, you’ll be the mother of the future king, your child will be a rightful heir, your father will be a relative of royalty, and everything will be peachy! Hooray, hooray!”

My first instinct was to grab her forehead in a clawhold.

“We only slept, and did nothing else!”

“Oh, that’s unfortunate... Ouch ouch, owowowow!!! That hurts quite a bit, you know!!!”

The ditzy maid was making too much noise, so I let her go. For some reason she was practically crying.

“Yeah, he’s only twelve...but you’ll have a chance when he grows up, yes you will! And you’re eighteen, so you’ll be a young couple blessed with a new life,

building a new kingdom with a future full of glory!”

“We’ve only just met. Who’s to say what the future holds?”

“Oh, come on, you know the prince is all over you! And your family’s future is secured now, congratulations!”

Quiet, ditzy maid, you’re the one wearing a coat with “Natori” on the back. She was doing a happy dance for some reason, so I turned my gaze to the sky in contemplation.

Almost no clouds in sight. I would have to face ten thousand troops today, so I needed to discuss our strategy with Yustin and Lord Clifton. But before that, the Floortje stable had to have its morning training, and then chanko. Normally, rikishi eat twice a day: just before noon, and in the evening. But here in this world we would have to abandon that schedule.

“Morning, Coach. Heh heh, that’s one provocative getup you’ve got on.”

“Have you ever heard of something called tact, apprentice?”

Oh no, I forgot I was still in my nightwear! I needed to go change right away. It was unbecoming to show yourself in such dress to those outside your family. *How embarrassing!* I hurried to my room. The prince was no longer there when I arrived—he must have returned to his own room.

Our family kept a trunk with spare clothes in the coach. Adela brought it to my room. This was where I’d gotten my nightwear the night before. I doubted there was any proper clothing for the prince in this village, but I wanted to browse the stores once they opened for the day. He had spent three days in that dungeon wearing the same outfit, and by now it was starting to look a little sooty. *Anyway—change of clothes first, morning training after!*

I needed to get out of this *dress* and put on my mawashi. As a matter of fact, I had made a shocking discovery the night before. Since this world was based on an otome game, clothing was set by default. Of course, I could change it when taking a bath, when relaxing in a private room, or when I carelessly chased my ditz of a maid all the way into the backyard in my nightwear. But there was probably some sort of dress code in this world, because in any setting that

required formal attire, such as the school or the castle, as the former “villainess,” I could only wear my dress and high heels. Even a summoned dohyō seemed to have such a dress code. I had tried to take off my high heels while standing on top of one earlier and couldn’t do it. Any casual clothing wouldn’t be allowed either.

And so it seemed I would have to enter the ring wearing this outfit every time. It must have been an adverse effect of shoving sumo into the world of this game. However, even if I had to wear a dress, I still wanted a mawashi on top. There had been no helping it the day before, when I could grab my opponents by their belts yet they couldn’t do the same to me, but it felt unfair. And fighting fair and square, under the same conditions, is a fundamental part of sumo. Sumo is a ritual, and it’s the gods who decide the winner: we, rikishi, are simply to give it our all and strive to win as much as possible. As I was racking my brains on how to deal with this, my sumo senses told me something.

“There’s a new feature called the ‘dressing room’?”

When I uttered its name, a relaxing piece of music started playing and I found myself in another dimension, surrounded by dancing rays of light.

“Whoa... This dressing room was in *Rondo*’s ‘Extras’ menu.”

In the game, you would get rewards for reaching endings, as well as scenes which automatically saved screenshots to the gallery. One such reward was costumes for this dressing room. There were various outfits for both love interests and heroines, and that included me, the “villainess.” Girls who played the game were likely to enjoy changing clothes for the game’s characters. I was very fond of doing this too: my desire to dress Prince Richie in a gym uniform even made me go for that wizard Douglas’s ending, when I had no interest in the ending itself.

Still, how did thinking about ways to put on a mawashi get me here? And then I noticed: one of the available fashion items was a black mawashi, looking ridiculously out of place. It was sitting near a headband, a parasol, a handbag, and other items of such nature. But it did solve my problem. I willed the cursor to move and click on the mawashi, which began to wrap itself around my dress with a glitter sound effect. Apparently, in this world, a loincloth was regarded as

a fashion item.

Once it was on and the glitter sound effect had played again, I was returned to the regular world. It felt wonderful to have a mawashi on, even if it was over a dress. And it was tied properly too: going from my backside, over my drawers, and ending at the front. There appeared to be slits where it came in contact with the dress. *Perfect*. Feeling ever more ready to push forward on the path of sumo, I strode out of the room with a black mawashi over my dress, heading downstairs. Outside, in the backyard, stood the members of the Floortje stable, wearing mawashi and mostly doing calisthenics.

“Morning, Coach. Oh, is that what I think it is?”

“Yes, I put on my mawashi this morning.”

“It becomes you, Coach.”

Yustin, being far older than me, was good at giving compliments. His mawashi getup was simply charming: he had the looks of a slim-built, muscular sumo wrestler—with a bit of fat, as both sumo and wrestling require weight. Not only does fat act as protection against blows, but also it makes you look good in a mawashi.

“That look suits you well, Yustin.”

“Thank you, Coach. It helps me brace myself for the challenges ahead.”

“Ha ha, you really did put it over your dress, uh...Coach.”

Which is why the same couldn't be said about Lord Clifton. His slim build and moderate muscle made him a handsome love interest in an otome game, but said muscle was barely enough for him not to look like someone had wrapped a loincloth over a telephone pole. Also, his legs were too long.

“Clifton, eat more chanko and put on weight.”

“Uh... Well... I guess I do want to look more like my master.”

“That's right, apprentice, you need some fat on that body of yours.”

“All right, I'll try my best.”

Although Lord Clifton was the frivolous type, his love for martial arts was

undeniable. I respected that part of him.

“H-How do I look, Floortje?” asked the prince, hesitantly.

It was PERFECT. That yellow mawashi adorning a delicate young body was the embodiment of perfection. Ah, it was so precious...I could practically melt from the preciousness of it. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“You’re gorgeous, Your Highness. I simply can’t get my fill of you.”

“Hey, don’t look at me like that!”

Ahh, those bashfully twitching cat ears! Try as he might, the prince couldn’t hide his preciousness from me. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

Adela looked as though she was expecting me to praise her “Natori” coat, but I had little interest in yobidashi.

“Now then, let’s begin our training.”

“Ehh, what about me, milady?”

You be quiet.

“Come forth, training room!”

As I finished chanting the spell, a training room fitted with a dohyō appeared in the inn’s backyard. And the floor was made of Arakida soil, which spoke to its high quality. There were poles for practicing teppo too.

“Wow, it’s amazing!”

“Now this is a fine floor.”

“And there’s a ring—let’s go fight!”

“Not so fast. Splits come first.”

“Splits?”

I spread my legs in opposite directions until they were in a straight line and lowered myself all the way to the ground. My students were looking at me as though I were a monster.

“You won’t be able to spread them this far at first, but it will come with

regular practice.”

Without moving my legs from their current position, I lowered my upper body to the ground and began stretching my back.

“The more flexible your hip joints are, the better you’ll be able to stand your ground. Give it a try.”

My students nervously started to spread their legs.

“Ow, owowow, my legs hurt, Coach!”

“Don’t push it too much or you’ll tear your ligaments. Do it in moderation.”

Lord Clifton didn’t seem to be very limber, but he did manage to spread his legs a fair distance.

“Ngh, mmmh!”

Yustin was more flexible and demonstrated a wider spread, but he couldn’t quite make a split.

“Practice this every morning. It takes several years for some, but this exercise greatly improves your movement in sumo.”

“So it’s vital to make your legs and hips work together, huh.”

“Floortje, look! I did it.”

I was surprised to see my beloved prince on the ground with his legs at right angles to his torso, forming a straight line. Either it was thanks to his young age or it was a perk of his beast-person blood—not that it mattered. His happy smile was precious indeed. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“That is magnificent, Your Highness. You have a talent for sumo.”

“I do? Eh heh heh...”

“Wow, Your Highness, you’re really limber,” commented Yustin.

“It’s amazing, Your Highness,” added Lord Clifton.

In a corner of the room, Adela was stretching her legs too. Not that yobidashi have to do this.

“Ow, owowow!”

“I didn’t think you could spread them so wide, Adela.”

“My duties require me to squat pretty often, so yes, I can!”

“Yobidashi don’t have to do this, though. Just watch for any uneven patches of ground and smooth them with a broom.”

“Whaaat?! Then what did I do a split for?!”

After I instructed everyone to do splits every morning, we moved on to the poles: it was time to give an explanation on teppo. Teppo is a basic part of sumo training which involves making open-handed thrusts at a round wooden pole, moving in rhythm with the thrusts of each hand. I needed to give a demonstration, but I feared my sumo spirit would channel too much power into me and I would end up destroying the pole, so I made sure to hold back. Thrust after thrust, I pushed forwards with the right side of my body when thrusting with my right hand, and my left side when thrusting with my left hand, alternating between the two.

“Wow, even that massive pole is shaking.”

“Floortje destroyed the pillar on the right side of my cell with this move in order to free me.”

“You’re serious...? So teppo is no joke, huh.” You could tell from Lord Clifton’s tone how impressed he was.

“Now, my students, you try it.”

“Coach, this isn’t the same as harite, right?”

“That’s right. With this your hand moves forwards and backwards, whereas to do harite you have to arc it a little.”

Both moves involve thrusting, but the trajectory is different. Basically, it’s kind of like the difference between a straight and a jab in boxing.

Yustin started doing teppo. He did it with about the right amount of force—no wonder his rank was komusubi.

“This is pretty good. It feels like throwing punches from a low stance at close range.”

“They say a sumo wrestler who mastered this technique once pushed his opponent out of the ring in a single thrust.”

“That’s quite the power.”

Lord Clifton joined his master in the exercise. He had a knack for it.

“Lower your center of mass a little—this is practice for both thrusting and pushing.”

“Got it. This is pretty tough, my hips hurt.”

It wasn’t surprising, since evidently this world’s inhabitants didn’t move with their backs bent very often.

It was the prince’s turn. *Mhm*. He was delivering light thrusts, but that was all right, for he was precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Extend your hand straight from around your chest.”

“Okay. Like this, right?”

“Well done, Your Highness.”

His thrusts became a bit stronger. The prince was a quick learner. He looked truly precious as he gave teppo his all. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*



My ditzy maid was moving around the room without a word, evening out the trampled ground with a broom. *That's better.*

Next, I showed them how to perform shiko. Spreading my legs and raising one of them high up, I placed my hands on my knees and brought my leg down on the ground with force. That was all there was to it, but it was far from easy. With my right leg up high, I stomped it. *Thud!* With my left leg up high, I stomped it. *Thud!* I could feel it; the air was getting purified with each impact. My new students struggled with this exercise as their hip joints hadn't been made pliable through splits yet. Lord Clifton looked particularly clumsy thanks to his long legs.

"Argh, this is hard!"

"Yeah, but I feel like this clears my mind."

"Looks like it gives a holy-type buff. Better add this move to my repertoire."

Meanwhile, Prince Richie had more success. He was huffing, delivering one energetic stomp after another: a truly precious sight. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* Perhaps it was thanks to his flexible hip joints that he was so adept at shifting his weight. *Magnificent! Bravo! How precious! Dosukoi dosukoi!*

"Very good, Your Highness."

"Ever since I saw how awesome you looked doing it, I wanted to try this myself."

"Why, thank you."

Ah, prince, prince. You're making me blush. Dosukoi dosukoi!

Oh, and you, in the "Natori" coat—you don't need to do this either. It would be rather improper to perform shiko in a maid outfit. Granted, the same could be said about doing it in a dress, but, you know, I was a resolute sumo wrestler.

Once we were done with shiko, I proceeded to teach everyone how to practice shuffling their feet in the ring. Such an enjoyable sight it was, watching my students walk around the ring with unsteady steps like newborn chicks, smiles on their faces.

Now that everyone had warmed up, we moved on to practice matches. Yustin

was tough and a quick learner, but I brought him down with a foot-throwing technique and a well-placed counter. Lord Clifton had strength, but his center of mass was still too high up, so I pulled him over myself and sent him to the ground.

The prince was cute and warm. He pushed me by my mawashi with all he had, looking utterly precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* I still brought him down, though. He rolled like a cat till he was outside the ring.

“Next up is battering practice.”

“Yes, Coach!” replied my students.

In battering practice, members of the stable split into two groups: those who push, and those who get pushed. This teaches wrestlers how to move near the edge of the ring.

That morning’s training was quite fulfilling.

Adela and I made breakfast together. We had pork, so it ended up being a pork salt chanko.

“Chanko again? Isn’t it a little heavy for morning, milady? Wouldn’t you rather relax and eat ham and eggs, a croissant, or some light porridge with milk, instead of abusing your stomach right after waking up?”

“Please, Adela. We’ve had morning practice, so it’s hardly ‘straight after waking up.’”

Though my maid was a loudmouth, she was also highly skilled in household duties, peeling potatoes quickly and efficiently. I chopped up some onions, washed the mushrooms, and proceeded to shred the latter with my hands.

“I know we have two more gentlemen to feed now, but we’re only making half as much as yesterday, right?”

“We’re making just as much.”

“Miladyyyy! We can’t eat that much in the morning! And this is basically soup, so if we can’t eat it all now, we can’t just take it with us to eat later.”

“Less talking, more cooking.”

Silence, my ditzy maid, or I'll treat you to a pulling inside ankle sweep.

Once we had a full pot ready, I brought it to the dining room.

“Yaaay, morning chanko!”

How sweet it was of the prince to cheer for our morning meal. Lord Clifton, on the other hand, had a stiff expression on his face.

“I-Isn't it a little heavy for a morning meal, Coach?”

“Shut up and eat, apprentice.”

“Come on, Master, wouldn't anyone want something light in the morning?”

As a resident of an otome game, Lord Clifton had rather extravagant eating habits.

“Eating properly is an important part of sumo training.”

“Oh... All right, guess I have to. Mmm, this is great!”

A delicious meal will put just about any boy in a good mood.

“It tastes so good today too! Thanks, Floortje!”

“Don't mention it. Eat as much as you can.”

I brought my spoon to my bowl and began eating. It was good. Especially the broth made from mushrooms and pork. If only I had chopsticks and rice... I wondered if the stores in my family's lands sold those. There were rice balls for sale in the royal capital, so there must have been rice, soy sauce, and miso in this world too.

Although I dug into my meal, I couldn't take much more than Prince Richie. How could I approach the ideal sumo wrestler build like this? It was a cause for concern.

“Gocchan.”

“‘Gocchan’?”

“It's what sumo wrestlers say after a meal, Your Highness.”

“Oh, okay. Gocchan.”

The prince's smile in that moment pierced my heart and set it aflame. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

"Gocchan here too."

"Gocchan." Yustin was done as well.

It certainly helped having men around to down this massive meal. Almost all of the chanko was gone.

"Ah, I'm stuffed, milady. Gocchan."

Yobidashi, you don't need to say it.

Leaving Adela to do the dishes, I wiped the table off, then spread the map that I had found at the inn on it.

"Lord Clifton, how soon do you think the troops will pass through here?"

"Let's see..." The lord looked at his wristwatch. "Troops wake up at half past eight, so by now they must have finished assembling in the square at the royal castle and begun to march."

"Hmm." I pointed at a bridge near our location. "When do you think the troops will reach this bridge?"

"I'd say around two in the afternoon."

"All right. They have to be stopped at the bridge."

"Burn down the bridge, got it."

What was this frivolous fellow talking about?

"I will fight them alone on this Dobiáš Bridge."

Everyone in the room was flabbergasted, uttering wordless cries of surprise.

"Th-That's reckless!" shouted Lord Clifton, before adding, "...Coach."

"Even a living legend would be conceited to think they could possibly stop ten thousand troops."

"Y-You can't go, Floortje, I don't want you to die..."

Prince Richie held his hands in front of his chest, looking up at me with teary

eyes. It was so, so precious. For a moment I even considered leaving the fight for another day. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* But the spirit of sumo deep inside me was angry at the mere suggestion of that. *Sorry, sorry.*

“Let’s flee, milady, let’s flee! Dépêchez-vous! Those troops are all slow anyway, we’ll beat them to the marquise’s capital!”

“And what will we do when they surround it?”

“W-Well, we have some troops of our own there, so they’ll deal with the attackers. You don’t need to put yourself on the line, milady!”

“We only have five thousand of those.”

“I-I hear you need three times as many forces if your enemy holds a castle, so we’ll be fine!”

And just how did she know something like that, anyway?

“There’s little point in holding a castle if no reinforcements are coming,” I said.

I pointed at the Dobiáš Bridge on the map.

“I will bring down all ten thousand right here. Worry not, my sumo spirit assures me I am perfectly capable of handling a mere ten thousand troops.”

Silence blanketed the dining room.

“Coach...” uttered Lord Clifton.

“And besides, if ten thousand is too many, we can forget about attacking Fort Varian or the royal castle.”

“I see you aren’t joking, Coach.”

“I want to save Prince Richie with these sumo powers of mine. Yustin, Lord Clifton, I want you two to guard him on our side of the bridge.”

“Very well. I shall guard him with my life.” Yustin gave a dignified nod and lowered his head.

“Floortje!!!” The prince ran to throw his arms around me. “D-Do your best, Floortje! D-Don’t die!!!”

I felt his childlike warmth against my belly. His warm tears fell on my chest. *It's all right, it's all right. Believe in me, and in sumo.* I gently patted his head. The feel of his fluffy ears gave me courage.

“You have my word, Your Highness: I shall return victorious.”

Tears in his voice, the prince quietly gave his assent. I felt a swarm of emotions surge through me as I rose from my seat, swearing to win the upcoming battle.

The time was two in the afternoon. I stood alone on the Dobiáš Bridge. Birds circled overhead, looking like black kites. Standing under an apple tree behind me was Prince Richie, guarded by Yustin and Lord Clifton, looking my way. An army began to appear in the distance as if spilling into this side of the mountain pass, filling the horizon with their black armor. At its front was a scout on horseback, making his way towards me.

“Out of the way, woman! You are obstructing the march of the Aryakan army!”

“My name is Floortje Hobbema, and I’m going nowhere. Your march ends here!”

“So you’re the insurgent Floortje! The army needn’t have bothered—I’ll bring your head back myself!”

“Come try and take it, scout!”

His black warhorse came charging at me, the stomping of its hooves echoing across the bridge. The scout readied his spear with a diabolical look on his face.

“Die!”

“Fool!”

I lowered my stance and caught the horse mid-charge from the front. With a loud *crash* thundering from the impact—the sort you wouldn’t expect to be caused by a maiden—the animal was brought to a stop. Grabbing the horse by its front legs, I forced them back.

“Wh-What?! A lady can’t possibly be this strong!”

Why, my dear scout, that's because I'm not some willowy lady.

“I! Am! An impervious sumo wrestler!!!”

Channeling strength into my hips, I flung the warhorse back where it came from.

“Aaaaah!!!”

Both horse and rider rolled over each other before crashing into the troops behind them. *One down.* All I had to do was repeat that ten thousand times and the army would be defeated. Easy.

The soldiers were unfazed by the scout's fate. They really were the kingdom's elite.

Clap clap clap clap! As I heard the rapid beating of wooden clappers, the table of rankings emerged, along with a red-bordered alert window. *A strong opponent has appeared (rank: sekiwake)!* Someone of higher rank than Yustin? His name was Maurilio Talamanca, of Combas City. It seemed Prince Jonas was so determined to stop me he'd even sent General Maurilio himself, one of the heads of the kingdom's army.

Incidentally, he too was romanceable in the game. Other than leading troops, he also taught martial arts at the magic school, which is how he and Jaromíra would come to know each other and fall in love. I doubted it would be very feasible to hold these two posts at once, but, well...it's an otome game, no sense in being too hard on it.

“My name is Maurilio Talamanca, Right General of the Aryakan army! Release Prince Richie at once, insurgent Floortje Hobbema, and submit to arrest! Do not resist and your life may be spared!”

“It is you who should disband your troops and kneel to the rightful heir—Prince Richie! General, do you intend to make that commoner Prince Jonas—the son of a concubine, and worse yet, one deceived by that sham of a saint—the next king?!”

A commotion spread amid the troops. This was a dispute within the royal family, and the soldiers had no way of knowing which prince had more legitimacy. The scariest prospect for them was their general joining an

insurgency only to be put down for opposing the legitimate ruler.

“Jaromíra is a proper saint! How dare you speak ill of her!” jabbered Maurilio, visibly shaken. It was clear his faith in the saint wasn’t genuine.

There was something strange about this. *The Rondo of Light and Darkness* was fairly strict about its romantic relationships, and so to my knowledge there was no harem route. If you, as Jaromíra, were headed for Prince Jonas’s ending, for example, other love interests didn’t cling to you so much.

How I was being treated as the supposed villainess was strange too. I remembered how, as part of disrupting the peace at school, I’d focused on Jaromíra, the daughter of a baron, long before I recalled my past life. However, in the game, Prince Jonas would only break off his engagement with Floortje—I wasn’t supposed to have any punishment coming my way. What’s more, it was pretty ridiculous to think the daughter of a marquis could possibly have the influence to send assassins after someone.

Something strange was happening in this world. And it fell on me and my sumo spirit to fix it.

I bellowed at General Maurilio.

“Why, then, did Prince Jonas send ten thousand troops after two fugitives?! Can’t you see that weakling of a usurper is afraid his wicked lover’s evil deeds will come to light?! If their claims are righteous, why won’t they come here in person?”

“Th-That’s because you, the insurgent Floortje, destroyed the royal castle with those contemptible techniques of yours and kidnapped the prince! They... Of course they would be afraid to...”

“They lied to you!!!”

To my surprise, I realized Prince Richie was standing right behind me.

“It’s dangerous here, Your Highness, stay back...”

“No! You’re facing an entire army alone for my sake! And if they’re going to throw baseless accusations at you, as a member of royalty I refuse to hide and abandon you!”

Prince... His legs were a little wobbly: he must've been scared of the troops. And yet he found the courage to come and stand by me. How regal! Ah, he truly was the future king of Aryaka.

"Look to my side, soldiers! Before you stands your next king! And you will all be remembered on the first pages of *The Legend of King Richie* as foolish rebels, scorned for all eternity!"

I channeled my sumo spirit into my voice in order to reach the ears of all the troops ahead. Ten thousand men were trembling like puppies in front of my eyes.

"A-All troops, prepare for battle! Assume the 'Hammer' Formation! Slay that insurgent and secure the prince!"

"B-But General!"

"*Silence!* This is an order! That insurgent on the bridge is as much of a threat as a dragon, so give it your all and save our kingdom from peril!"

"You're welcome to try, Maurilio! I'm not going anywhere, for I cannot see myself losing to the likes of you—twisting the truth and trying to force your maleficence upon innocents—even should there be ten thousand of you!"

The troops began issuing commands among each other, changing their formation. As for me, I began the ring-entering ceremony on the bridge. Yustin came running to take the prince back with him under the apple tree. *Please don't look like you're about to cry, Your Highness.*

"Don't lose to them, Floortje!!!"

"Your wish is my command!"

Raising my right leg high up, I performed shiko while waiting for the troops to finish falling into formation. It seemed they were putting pikemen in the front, cavalry in the middle, and archers and spellcasters in the back.

"What sort of formation is that...?"

"The 'Hammer' Formation was developed for fighting enormous magical beasts. First, the pikemen at the front try to stop the monster's legs. Then the cavalry also assaults its legs, further robbing the monster of mobility. The two

units attack in waves until the target is sufficiently weakened, after which the archers and spellcasters finish the job,” said a particular yobidashi, who had appeared beside me at some point.

“How do you know all that, Adela?”

“Heh heh. It’s a secret, milady. Your best strategy here would be to take advantage of the fact you’re alone and charge through the front ranks of pikemen and cavalry to wipe out the archers and spellcasters in the back.” Where did this ditz pick up such information?

“Thank you, Adela. Stand back, it’s dangerous here.”

“Yes, milady. I pray for your success.”

She briskly walked back to the apple tree. Adela and I had spent our childhood together, as the two of us had been raised in the same castle, and yet nothing in my memories suggested she had ever served in the army. *Oh well.*

The troops looked nearly done with their maneuvers. I wasn’t going to rely on any clever tactics. All I had to do was crush the enemies in front of me. For I was an impregnable sumo wrestler!

The troops were ready. General Maurilio stood in the middle of the formation, behind the cavalry.

“Men! Your target is the insurgent Floortje Hobbema! Charge!!!” The general unsheathed his sword and barked his orders as he swung it down.

“Rahhh!!!” resounded through the ranks.

The pikemen came rushing at me like a surging wave. They gradually formed three rows with their pikes, which spanned two meters in length.

“Have some of this Purification Salt!” I threw a fistful of it their way.

“Gaaah!!!”

“My eyes, my eyes!!!”

The front row scattered, many of them crashing into the middle row behind them. I lowered my stance and dashed into their disorganized ranks.

“Arghh!!!”

“Ngaah!!!”

My harite sent the pikemen flying. The middle and back rows tried to stab me, but the front row was in their way. Finding a pikeman covering his eyes, I grabbed his belt in a deep underarm grip and forced my knee between his legs. *Bzzzzt.*

“Lightning Inner-Thigh Throw!!!”

I threw the pikeman into the center of the unit’s ranks, making him crash like a lightning strike. The high voltage zapped through a couple dozen soldiers, blowing them away. For a brief moment, I was alone in my immediate vicinity. *Whoosh!*

Kgh! Was that a crossbow bolt?! I spotted several crossbowmen hiding among the archers.

“Now!!! Shoot her, kill her!!!”

A bolt had grazed my cheek. I felt some blood trickle down.

“She fights in melee range, so stay back and snipe her with those crossbows!” shouted the general sitting on his horse.

The pikemen moved behind me to cut off my path of escape, pointing their pikes to the sky.

Crossbows can hit targets farther away, allowing their wielders to snipe me. It looked like I’d been lured to where they wanted me to be. Projectile weapons are a natural counter to martial arts, since it’s hard to close that much distance in a short amount of time. At a glance, there were about ten crossbowmen. If they all shot me at once, I wouldn’t be able to dodge.

“Fire!”

First, five of them fired. It looked like they were planning to take turns, so the other five would fire while the first group reloaded.

My sumo senses stirred. *A new skill?* I felt the holy sumo power settle in my right hand. The skill was a harite, but no ordinary harite: a very, very long harite that could reach anywhere. At once, I came up with a name for it.

“Harite Catapult!!!”

With a *boom*, my right hand broke the sound barrier. A palm-shaped shock wave smashed the incoming bolts, hit a crossbowman on the cheek, and swept him off his feet.

Boom after *boom* could be heard as my hands broke the sound barrier one after the other. The shock waves brought down crossbowmen on the right and left.

“Wh... What?!” General Maurilio stared at me in bewilderment.

The crossbowmen meant to be shooting next didn’t bother waiting for the general’s orders and fired at once. Several bolts came flying my way before being promptly redirected. Even more shooters ended up on the ground—only three were left. But they were far away from me. *Beep beep beep!* A crosshair manifested in front of me, centered over one of them. In red sumo calligraphy, these words appeared: *Target Locked*.

“Harite Catapult, fire!!!”

Boom! As the roar of an explosion swept through the surroundings, a palm-shaped shock wave knocked its target off his feet. Another two *booms*, and the last of the crossbowmen were lying on the ground.

“What will it be next?! Ranged, melee?! If you’re not afraid of sumo, then come all you want! I’ll take you all down!”

“No way. How is she... Impossible...”

With his jaw wide open, the general stared at me from atop his horse. There was terror in his eyes. Up in the air, birds continued to circle overhead, twittering every now and then.

You could view an army as a single organism. A creation of humanity, using soldiers as its cells to oppose enormous or numerous enemies. The strength of an army comes from the minds of its soldiers. When faced with injustice, invasion, or oppression perpetrated by their enemies, they fight with surprisingly high morale, displaying heroism on the battlefield. But the weakness of an army also comes from the same place. When ordered to

oppress the weak or slaughter civilians, when the soldiers themselves believe they're in the wrong—that's when their morale goes down, weakening them in battle. At that point, their leader can only rely on pure numbers and the troops' training.

The army of ten thousand standing before me was hurting and paralyzed in fear. The pikemen had suffered heavy casualties. Among the archers' ranks, only crossbow-wielders were capable of targeting me, and all of them were now on the ground, groaning in pain. The cavalry clearly felt the pressure too. Then, the spellcasters stepped forth.

"Attack her with magic! No area-of-effect spells, as they would hit friendlies—single-target spells only, and stay far back! Now put an end to that insurgent!" shouted the general.

They began casting their spells as they walked towards me.

"Fire Bolt!"

"Ice Lance!"

"Stone Javelin!"

"Wind Scythe!"

A barrage of medium-level spells filled the sky before descending towards me. I raised my right leg. *Stomp!* With an echo which spread across the bridge, all the magic broke up and dissipated.

"Impossible!!! Military magic is supposed to be warded against dispels!"

"How could she break through the Destroyer Charm so easily?!"

"Perhaps it's the effect of some holy-type aura?!"

I couldn't say how it worked, but magic was powerless in the face of sumo. *Don't bother explaining this stuff to me, you eggheads.* Shuffling my feet along the ground, I quickly closed the distance to one of them and grabbed the waist cord of his robe in a deep underarm grip.

"Agggh! What are you doing?!"

"A beltless arm throw."

I stuck a hand under his armpit. *Whoosh.*

“Wh-What?! My wind magic, no!!!”

A strong gale blew from nowhere in particular. As I knocked the wizard off-balance, it only grew in intensity. A swirling green mass of magical energy formed around the two of us. The wind raged and howled, flipping my skirt and the wizard’s robes. Could it be...my beltless arm throw had been granted a magical effect?!



“Tornado Beltless Arm Throw!!!”

The wind swept up the hapless wizard and spun him around on his way to his friends, releasing him in their midst with a burst.

“Aggh!!!”

“Ngaah!!!”

About twenty were incapacitated by the ensuing gale, sprawled powerlessly across the ground here and there. A thought visited me: had my beltless arm throw gained the wind attribute because I performed it on a user of wind magic? Would it gain a different attribute if I threw someone who specialized in a different school of magic? Conveniently enough, the casters’ robes were colored according to their favored attribute: red for fire, blue for water, yellow for earth, and green for wind. I shuffled my way towards a blue-robed wizard.

“No! Stay back!!!”

Sticking a hand under his armpit, I threw him off-balance. *Whoosh!* No—it turned out the attribute of this move would be wind either way. I finished off my target with the same beltless arm throw.

“Gwhaah!!!”

He too was sent flying to the other wizards: the ensuing gale swept through the remaining spellcasters.

“Aagghh!!!”

“Gaaah!!!”

This was fun. I went around doing beltless arm throws on wizards of all colors, accompanied by the roar of the wind.

“Gaaaaah!!!”

“Ngaaah!!!”

“C-Cavalry, save the casters! Trample her!”

I heard the stomping of hooves approaching from behind. The knights readied their lances from atop their galloping mounts. *Can I do a beltless arm throw on a horse...?* Spreading my legs and lowering my center of mass, I intercepted a

horse charging towards me. Its rider tried to impale me with his lance, but I didn't give him the opportunity. Slipping my hands under the animal's legs, I forced it off-balance. *Whoosh!* The horse was foaming at the mouth: clearly, it didn't appreciate my technique. Not that I cared as I used my whole body to twist my target. *Whooosh!* Beltless arm throw, complete. A tornado formed where the horse had once stood, roaring its way towards the rest of the cavalry. It swept up its unfortunate victims before bursting and sending them flying every which way.

"Gwhaah!!!"

"Agghhh!!!"

Guess it works on horses too!

"Who said you could lie down?! You're barely hurt at all! Get up and fight!!!" shouted General Maurilio at the pikemen, who were sitting on the ground and hugging their knees.

That was on my mind too. They were still alive, so why didn't they keep coming at me?

"If I may, General. We've lost to Lady Floortje. A whole unit, pikes in hand, attacked her at once and lost. Are you telling us to fight with no regard for honor?!" spoke one of the pikemen, indignation in his voice.

"You are the kingdom's elite and you dare abandon the fight while you're still alive?! I'll have you court-martialed!"

The soldier's face contorted at those words.

"General!!! I didn't join the army to...to kill...ladies!!!" So saying, he broke into a crying fit.

"That's right! It's as he said! We wanted to protect our children, protect our people, like that lady over there!" By the time another soldier was done speaking, he was bawling too.

"She's protecting the young prince! All alone! Fighting with valor! And you want us to...to come again and again... We can't!" All the pikemen were in tears already.

“You...you half-wits! Imbeciles!” The general’s shoulders were shaking, and he too couldn’t resist the tears.

In the meantime, I cleaned up the cavalry with more beltless arm throws.

The spellcasters, the cavalrymen, even the as-yet-unhurt archers—all of them were bawling. The general looked at me with teary eyes.

“We lose...”

“Not yet,” I replied.

“What?!”

“I have no mercy. I’ll give you such a good drubbing you’ll be out of commission for a long time.”

The army of ten thousand shook at my declaration.

“General—I challenge you to a duel in sumo!”

“Whaaat?!” His scream echoed through the wilderness.

“Come forth, dohyō!”

A dohyō rose out of the ground. I wondered if it came with lucky charms buried inside, such as dried squid, kombu, dried chestnuts, or rice. It must have: for it to be otherwise would be the kind of mistake this world’s god of sumo wouldn’t make.

I strode up onto the dohyō to the rhythmic beating of wooden clappers. Adela showed up out of nowhere, restlessly looking around.

“Huh, oh, I have to do the announcing? Okay, okay.” She was receiving instructions from her translucent senior. “On the east, Floortje, Floortje... On the west, Maurilio, Maurilio...”

That ditz didn’t look half bad announcing wrestlers with her white folding fan.

Pale, with sweat trickling down his face, the general was forced up onto the ring.

“I-I refuse to do sumo.”

“A bit late to have second thoughts, don’t you think, General?”

As Adela briefly stepped down from the dohyō, she returned with a sponsor’s prize banner and proceeded to circle the ring along with several translucent banner-wielding yobidashi. For some reason, she had a broad smile on her face.

“Erhard is a terrifying man...”

“Did the captain of the royal guard do something to you?”

“He had my armor imbued with a magic bomb. Said you would definitely come and fight up close, and that’s when I should blow us both up...”

“A bomb?”

“I thought he was joking, since how could you possibly get through ten thousand troops? And yet, here we are...”

Ridiculous. A bomb was clearly against the rules. It would never be allowed in sumo.

“It seems you couldn’t keep quiet about the bomb, General. Unfortunately, I have to detonate it now,” came Erhard’s flippant voice.

On the general’s black-armored shoulder appeared the number “5,” before it quickly changed to “4.”

“Oh God! You have to get off this platform, Lady Floortje! Don’t let it claim you too!” shouted the general.

But I wasn’t about to simply step out of the ring.

“General Maurilio broke the rules,” said I to the referee.

The elderly referee of the traditional house Shikimori nodded in the most serene way possible and lowered his war fan.

“Hurry up!!!” shouted General Maurilio again as the number on his shoulder switched to “2.”

The referee swiftly pointed his fan upwards, and in an instant, the general’s armor disappeared. He stood in the ring, completely naked. *Ka-boom!* A massive explosion pierced the skies, its sound following soon after. Soot rained down on all of us from above as we stared at the sky, speechless: the general,

Adela, ten thousand troops, and yours truly.

“Wh-What...?”

“This referee comes from house Shikimori, so naturally he can use instant teleportation magic. Isn’t it obvious?”

A group of translucent judges, each a sumo elder, entered the ring.

“Do you wish to continue the bout, Miss Floortje?”

Hey, that’s the former yokozuna who died a while ago! I could only dream of ever speaking with him! Actually, I had to wonder about the chronology of this whole fabrication. Were all these people being summoned from the sumo version of Valhalla where rikishi go when they die?

“He did not break the rules of his own accord, so I very much would prefer to continue.”

The former yokozuna flashed a smile. It was satisfying to look at. *Your bouts were always so thrilling to watch when I was little. Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Regarding the earlier infringement: the magic bomb was planted on the wrestler without his consent, therefore we will overlook this transgression,” announced a judge.

The audience cheered in agreement. At some point ringside seats had appeared and were now filled with soldiers. There were box seats too, where soldiers ate their lunch and drank sake. It seemed the dohyō was developing more and more of its usual surrounding facilities. Perhaps that was thanks to my rise through the ranks, or because it was the last bout of the day. I couldn’t tell.

As the referee brought down his fan, a deep-red mawashi slowly descended from above and landed in the general’s hands.

“What is this?”

“A mawashi. The sumo uniform. Yustin, Clifton, help him put it on.”

“All right. Let’s get it on you, General,” spoke Yustin.

“I’ll help, sir.”

“Yustin... Clifton...”

Looking around me while throwing salt, I saw Prince Richie as well. When he noticed my gaze, he smiled and waved his hand a little. *How precious. Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Anyway, in this sport it’s important to keep your balance closer to the ground as you grapple with your opponent,” said Clifton. “Punches aren’t allowed, but you’ll just get a debuff on their power, it won’t cause your immediate loss. Though I wouldn’t recommend it anyway, since it pisses people off.”

“Wh-Why are you being so helpful to your enemy?”

“Hah hah... Sir, no matter how much I tell you, you’re never going to beat my coach Floortje. Think of it as sparring practice with your senior and don’t worry too much.”

“She likes fighting fair and square, so she’d rather avoid winning just because her opponent didn’t have all the information they needed. Well—I suppose it’s not just her. While this martial art is a sport, it is also a ritual, so fairness is part of its nature.”

“A sport *and* a ritual...”

With a deep-red mawashi pulled tight around his loins, the general had the looks of a brawny, slim-built wrestler. After Yustin taught him how to move about in sumo, the general was practicing the half-sitting posture.

“Now, General Maurilio, let us enjoy sumo, shall we?”

“O-Okay! Sumo it is, Lady Floortje!”

His eyes were looking better now. *Let the sumo begin!* We had already spent too much time in preparation.

The two of us faced each other from across the lines in the center of the ring. My opponent no longer had an air of hesitation about him. I was glad, because it meant he could fight with all he had. And as for the result, let the gods decide that—for sumo is a ritual.

“Face each other.”

We stared each other down. I felt our energy build up as the general and I strove to pressure each other. He touched the line on the ground. In that moment, our velocity peaked as we crashed into each other, square in the center of the ring.

“Hakkeyoi!”

The thoroughly unladylike sound of our collision shook the dohyō.

My opponent was appropriately strong for his high rank of sekiwake. *Such power!* His right hand latched onto my mawashi. Mine latched onto his. Each of us used our left hands for an additional, outside grip.

“Still in, still in...” repeated the referee with his peculiar intonation.

We were locked together in the center of the ring, trying to push each other. It was a classic example of *oshi-zumō*—a sumo style focused around thrusting at and shoving the opponent rather than grabbing their belt. As the general kept his center of mass appropriately low with his hips close to the ground, it took all my strength to halt his advances. I tried using my grip for a forceful pull instead of a push in order to make my opponent charge sideways, and though he lost his balance for a brief moment, he quickly regained it and held firm. The general had a knack for sumo, all right. Next, I tried thrusting. The back-and-forth between pushing and pulling is the real thrill of this sport. By having two powerful forces collide in the ring, we make a sacred offering to the god of sumo.

“Wow...” uttered the general.

I didn’t miss the opportunity and pushed harder, causing his massive figure to inch backwards. In response, he strained his muscles and pushed in return, putting us back to where we were.

“This is fun.”

“It is.”

Sumo *is* fun. You use your rigorously trained body to its fullest, sweating as your muscles build heat from expanding and contracting while you struggle to

bring down your opponent. That's what makes sumo fun.

"Still in, still in..."

I went for a throwing technique. General Maurilio quickly shifted his weight to deflect my attack and went for a kick of his own. *Such good intuition!* I shifted my weight too and dodged the kick. *Ah, this is fun!* I pushed and pushed. Gradually, the enormous frame before me was forced to the edge of the ring.

"Kgh!" The general's expression looked tense. "I won't lose so easily!!!"

His shoulder muscles pumped up, raising his strength manyfold, and with that, he pushed me back, farther and farther.

"Go for it, Coach!"

"Don't let up now, Coach!"

I heard Yustin and Lord Clifton call out to me from the ringside seats.

"General Maurilio!!!"

"Put your back into it!"

The troops voiced their support for their general too.

"Of course! You think I'd lose to a lady?!" shouted Maurilio before redoubling his advances.

He managed to push me past the central lines. *Impressive strength, Maurilio. But there's a reason you can't win against me. And that's...*

"You can do it, Floortje!!!"

...because I have Prince Richie. Hearing his voice instantly set my heart ablaze. My spirit of sumo was now fully awake, and I was ready to do *my* sumo.

"Ggh, what is this force?!"

"This is...my...love!!!"

"Ngh! Can't do anything about that one!"

I pushed, and pushed, and pushed.

"Mrngggghhh!!!"

That giant of a man was sliding along the ground. As I went for an *uchigake*—an inside leg trip—on his right leg, my body was...shining? As I tripped his left leg with my hand, I could see I really did have light emanating from me. The next moment, Maurilio's weight disappeared. A rail track of light had formed on the ground, and the general went sliding along it at high speed. I came up with a name for this new technique.

"Maglev Triple Attack Force Out!!!"

General Maurilio zoomed away on the maglev tracks of light, launched out of the ring at an extreme speed.

"Gwaaah!" His scream grew less audible as he flew away into the distance.

Spinning through the air, he landed in the wilderness and rolled along the ground. To think this world's sumo had techniques powerful enough to summon an entire maglev track... Anyone who stepped on one would float, lose their weight, and be physically flung outside the ring.

"Floortje..." The referee raised his war fan towards me.

As the audience erupted in cheers, the referee brought my prize money on top of his fan. Performing the ceremonial *tegatana*, I accepted it. To my surprise, this time the stack of envelopes didn't vanish. Perhaps these things were growing to be more material. *Anyway, thanks.* There seemed to be many gold coins inside.

The general returned, wobbling on his feet as his men supported him.

"That was a splendid bout, Floortje. You crushed me."

"You fought well too, General."

He had a smile on his face that told me he had managed to put his doubts behind him. At some point, the birds above us had gone away.

Slowly, the general ascended the *dohyō* before addressing his troops.

"Men! We, the first mixed formation of the royal army, have lost to Lady Floortje! I shall bear the responsibility for this and resign from my post!"

The troops in the box seats rose up.

“Please don’t quit, sir!”

“You’ll always be our general!”

“It wasn’t your fault! It’s all because of Jaromíra and Jonas!”

They sure loved their general. I could tell by their voices.

“I... I would like to become a sumo wrestler, however minor,” the general continued. “Will you take me under your wing, Coach Floortje?”

“Very well. From now on, you will push forwards on the path of sumo.”

Yustin and Lord Clifton ran up to him.

“Glad to have you with us, General.”

“I’m your senior in this stable, sir.”

Everyone had joyful smiles on their faces. Picking up sumo let them instantly cast away their hesitations and made them smile. That is the nature of sumo.

The general addressed his troops again.

“It is as you’ve just heard! Now, I want you all to return to the royal capital and rejoin your old units!”

A commotion spread through the army.

“I-I want to do sumo too!”

“It’s no fair if you’re the only one who gets to join her!”

“Me too! I want to do sumo too!”

Ten thousand troops were all on their feet, unanimously voicing their desire to join me.

“Sumo is amazing! I want to try it too!”

“Take us with you, sir, please don’t leave us!”

“I don’t want to serve Jaromíra and Jonas after all this. I want to serve Prince Richie and Lady Floortje!”

“I want to research the magical properties of sumo!”

“I want to discover the secrets of the magic-imbued initial charge!”

All ten thousand of them were stating their requests. Like the sound of whirling tides, their voices thundered across the dohyō.

“That’s what you all want—to do sumo?!”

“We want to do sumo!!!” shouted many at once.

The general seemed at a loss as he looked my way. *Fine, my new student.* I raised one hand and stepped forward. The soldiers immediately went quiet.

“The training in our stable is rigorous! If you’re all right with that, then come!”

“Yeah!!!” shouted the troops with their fists in the air.

“Floortje! Floortje! Floortje! Floortje!”

“Oh deaaar... Our clan membership just grew by ten thousaaand... How will we ever make enough chankooo...?”

I heard a certain yobidashi moaning behind me, but paid it no heed.

There was something strange, though. The final bout was over, and yet the dohyō didn’t seem to be going away.

“Before the award ceremony, we shall face the dohyō and sing the national anthem. Everyone, please rise.”

Oh, even that is happening now. We hurried off the dohyō. Adela’s translucent senior told her to bring a flag and a championship cup, which she promptly did. I thought we would be singing “Kimigayo,” the Japanese national anthem, but then the prelude of Aryaka’s national anthem started playing.

“Born at dawn on the continental plains, we run and fight for our fatherland... ♪” sang the ten thousand troops gathered around the dohyō, all together.

That song resonated with me every time I heard it. Yustin, Lord Clifton, and even the former general Maurilio were singing with their eyes closed. I sang too, all while enjoying Prince Richie’s beautiful singing beside me. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* I also heard Adela singing a little off-key.

The late former yokozuna climbed the dohyō. Called over by Adela, I went up too and stood to one side.

“Floortje Hobbema! You are awarded with this certificate attesting to your splendid performance in the tournament at the Hobbema marquisate on the 2nd of July.”

The sumo elder I had admired in my previous life gave me an award certificate. I was very happy as I accepted it and passed it to the corporeal yobidashi. Next came an *enormous* trophy. It was pretty heavy. I didn’t expect Adela to be up to the task, so I let Yustin carry it for me. Many translucent people came to commend me. Even the president of Pan Am praised me in broken language. *Thank you for making the journey.*

There were various trophies: the usual trophy cups, one made of crystal glass, and some others. There was even an acrylic bottle filled with shiitake mushrooms, courtesy of the agricultural cooperatives from Oita prefecture. Never thought I’d ever get one of those. *Thank you.*

There were all sorts of extra prizes such as miso, soy sauce, and rice. Heh heh, now I could feed the prince some good chanko. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* There was, of course, no half a year’s worth of gasoline among the prizes, since this world didn’t have gas stations or cars.

At last, the long streak of awards was over. I expressed my gratitude to the dohyō and stepped down, after which it sank back into the ground. My prizes and trophies didn’t seem to be going away, so I decided I would put them on display at my castle’s guest hall.

With that, it was time to stay the night before making a journey to my domain’s capital the following day. My stable had grown by ten thousand members. It was probably fine: all I had to do was listen to my sumo spirit. For sumo is a ritual that makes everyone happy. The sound of drums signaling the end of the tournament day could be heard. Adela was standing around with a pensive look, so I gave her a push on the back. It was time to make a camp large enough to fit my army of students.

Interlude: Central Dining Room at Aryaka's Royal Castle

Eating her fancy dinner in an enormous, luxuriously furnished dining room together with Prince Jonas and Erhard, Jaromíra was listening to the latter's report. The table before them held all sorts of delicacies.

"What?! Are you telling me an army of ten thousand went missing?!"

"Yep, all of those plus General Maurilio. I wonder why."

With a hysterical cry, Jaromíra threw a goblet at a wall.

"Why?! Didn't you say ten thousand would be enough to get rid of her?! What happened—where's Maurilio?!"

"He probably lost. That suicide bomb went off, it seems."

"Suicide bomb...? What the hell?! Is Maurilio dead?"

An orderly came running.

"Mhm... Really...? Mhmm..."

"Wh-What's going on?! Tell me, Erhard!"

"Good news. Actually, I guess it's bad news. The general is alive, but he and the ten thousand under his command have changed allegiance and are now serving Prince Richie."

"Wh-Why...? Just...why...?"

"Maurilio, the Right General of the royal army...serving Richie. No way..." Jaromíra and Prince Jonas looked pale as death.

"C-Contact Fort Varian immediately and give them orders to poison King Arvi!" Jaromíra cried. "If the king is dead, we can hold the coronation ceremony! Quick, give him poison!"

"Y-You want to k-kill my f-father...? I..."

“If you aren’t crowned right away, we’re done for! You must use any means at your disposal!”

Watching Jaromíra’s disgraceful behavior, Erhard sneered faintly.

“Slow down, my lovely Jaromíra. If you harm the king, the highest levels of nobility will start an uprising, neighboring countries will step in, and Aryaka will be history.”

Jaromíra slammed her soup plate on the table.

“It was *you*, Erhard! You told me you would make me queen! And I believed you, and did as you said! Explain yourself!”

“Relax. Every plan has miscalculations.”

Jaromíra stamped her feet.

“‘Miscalculations,’ that’s what you call this?! Our lives are at stake! What if we lose?!”

“My sweet Jaromíra, would you head to Fort Varian? It’s full of Temple Knights. You will be able to use ‘Crusade’ there.”

A brief moment of silence.

“Y-Yes, you’re right! ‘Crusade’ should be enough to finally put that accursed villainess in the ground. F-Fine, I’m going to Fort Varian.”

“You sure? She’s some weird ‘sumo wrestler’...”

“It’s fine! You think I’m scared of sumo?! It’s just some game for fatties!”

“R-Really? Well, if you say so...”

Jaromíra had a tiny smile on her face.

“‘Crusade’ doubles the combat prowess of any holy knights. It also affects them with ‘Heightened Morale,’ ‘Empty Head,’ ‘Reduced Fatigue,’ and ‘Pain Suppression.’ Many of them will probably die, but such is the duty of their order. Then I can finally kill that vile, despicable Floortje.”

Erhard was spinning his glass of top-class brandy, a faint smile on his face.

“Heh, so you beat Maurilio and a big army. I guess sumo is pretty amazing.

But you can't possibly beat Dmitry at Fort Varian with your sumo. Nobody could beat him with martial arts. Heh heh. Meet your end before the king's eyes, foolish Floortje."

With a chuckle, Erhard proceeded to drink his bloodred brandy. The banquet went on, with unbelievable delicacies being brought to the table one after another. But none of the diners looked like they were enjoying their meal.

Chapter 3: Sumo at Fort Varian

A full day after reaching the marquissate, we were finally at the capital. There had been no further issues, save for the distinct dark circles under Adela's eyes—she had to look after a whole army now. The guards at the town gate had questions for them, but that was no longer a problem once they saw me.

“So this is Hobbels, the capital of the Hobbema marquissate? It's more prosperous than I thought.”

“The local harbor sees a lot of activity, and that includes trade, Clifton.”

“Hey, I've already graduated from magic school, so spare me the geography class, sir.”

“So this is where you were born, Coach? It's a nice town.”

That's right, Yustin, Hobbels is a lovely place. Its only trouble was frequent rainstorms in the summer. It was warm in the winter, and the marine products were aplenty. A neat, thriving town.

I wondered where I could house my new army of students. It seemed wise to make a stop at the castle first and say hello to my father. And I needed to introduce Prince Richie.

“It's a beautiful town, Floortje. It's just like you.”

The prince had a precious smile on his face. So, so precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* Pulling him by the hand, I hurried through the central street to the castle. And with my army of students behind me, it was like a parade. Passersby waved at me.

Although said army amounted to ten thousand soldiers, only about five thousand of them actually fought. The others were officers, supply troops, those doing public works, and so on. The supply troops were especially numerous. Food transportation, cooking, the provision of housing—their duties had no direct connection to combat, but without them, an army couldn't function.

I had the general pick out twenty of his men with good constitution who were skilled in martial arts. They would be our elite unit of sumo wrestlers, each fighting in nothing but a mawashi—the proper rikishi uniform. After two days of training under my supervision, they were ready. Walking beside their valiant figures felt uplifting. For those with long hair, I used pomade to tie it up in topknots. They were greatly pleased with the result.

“Who are the people behind you, milady?”

“Sebastian, these are my clan’s recruits.”

In front of the drawbridge leading to the castle I met Sebastian, our steward. Seeing her father, Adela promptly hid behind the unit of rikishi.

“Do we have enough room for ten thousand people?” I asked.

“Hmm,” said Sebastian. “You could have half of them camp at the parade ground, while the others could go in the castle or in open spaces. Let the officers lodge at the castle.” Then he noticed Prince Richie, and froze up. “Milady...”

“This is Second Prince Richie. I’m looking after him since Prince Jonas started a rebellion and is trying to usurp the throne.”

“Oh dear... So the rumors were true. A clan, you said? I must admit, it’s a good excuse to talk soldiers into joining your army.”

I couldn’t be bothered to explain.

“But milady... Those ears...” Sebastian went on in a hushed voice, looking at the prince.

“It’s an atavism, apparently.”

“Hmm... So it’s from Marchioness Melinda, the woman who became queen five generations ago. I see.”

It was his maternal lineage, then. There was a kingdom of beast-people bordering Aryaka, and sometimes the nobles of the two kingdoms married each other. The prince was of marquis descent.

Not that it really mattered, because I was quite eager to have the prince meet my father. Pulling him by the hand, I crossed the drawbridge.

“Well then, I shall stay here and see to the troops’ accommodations.”

“Please do, Maurilio.”

With only Yustin, Lord Clifton, and my elite unit of twenty rikishi following behind me, I walked through the castle grounds.

“It’s a nice little castle.”

“Thank you, Your Highness.”

Our castle was about half the size of the royal one, but it was a neat stronghold nonetheless. And it had the history to match.

Ascending the stairs, I headed to my father’s office. Sebastian opened the door for us.

“What’s the matter, Floortje? There must’ve been trouble if you’re here so quickly after the graduation.”

This middle-aged looker was my father, Marquis Deenan Hobbema. Once I summed up the recent events for him, he fell from his chair.

“Wh-What?! Prince Jonas broke off the engagement?! And you rescued Prince Richie from the dungeon, beat up ten thousand troops and then came here?! And you expect me to believe such a story?!”

“But it’s true.”

“It’s true, Your Lordship.”

My father put his chair back up and reseated himself.

“H-Hard as it is to believe, you do have Prince Richie with you, so General Maurilio must have switched sides. Welcome to my castle, Your Highness. May you find my domain a hospitable one.”

“Thank you, Marquis Hobbema.”

The prince expressed his gratitude in a refined manner, with these words and a very adorable bow. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Well then, I shall send circulars to the influential nobles in every corner of my lands to form an opposition to those supporting Prince Jonas. You are the legitimate heir, so this is far from a lost cause.”

“We don’t have time for that, father. Tomorrow we march on Fort Varian to rescue King Arvi, so would you be so kind as to lend us your troops?”

“Are you out of your mind?” said father after a pause.

“I wish to free my father. Please lend me your aid,” said the prince, looking ready to cry.

My father faltered, just as I had planned. Despite his looks, he was quite the sympathetic type.

“B-But, you know... Fort Varian is impregnable. You can’t just take it with ten or even twenty thousand...”

“It’s a race against time. If they manage to persuade King Arvi to let Jonas be crowned, it’ll be over for us.”

Father folded his arms in thought.

“But there’s only so much you can do with such numbers...”

“Don’t worry, father. I’ll do something.”

“Are you insane, Floortje?! What could a sheltered girl like you possibly do?! Keep your nose out of this!”

It seemed I would need to show father my sumo. I aimed at the wall-mounted deer-head trophy above him. A crosshair appeared with a beeping sound, the wall trophy square in the center. *Target locked.*

“Harite Catapult!”

Boom, came the palm-shaped shock wave, blowing the unfortunate deer head right off the wall.

“What did you do, Floortje...?”

“This is sumo, father.”

With his mouth agape, he let his eyes travel between me and the wall now bereft of its trophy. *This is sumo, father.*

I was peeling potatoes in the castle’s large kitchen, surrounded by supply

troops who were after the recipe of the chanko I was making, as well as castle maids running about. My ditz of a maid showed up too.

“Milady! How much of this ‘miso’ soybean soup stock should I put in?”

“Depends on the pot and the amount of other ingredients.”

“Ah, come on, then I can’t tell at all! Assume it’s a regular-sized pot full of ingredients!”

“Put in two tablespoons, then if it’s tasteless add some more.”

“Got it!”

Feeding my new army of students certainly wasn’t a simple task. The miso and rice I had received as extra prizes were nearly gone already, and most of the prize money had been spent on supplies. But I wasn’t too worried: if I needed money, it was there inside the dohyō. All I had to do was fight and earn some more.

Once our pot of chanko was ready, it was time to bring it to Prince Richie.

“Would you mind, Sebastian?”

“Right away, milady. But I must ask: When did you learn to cook?”

“At school.”

It was a lie: I had learned it in the women’s sumo club in my past life. I had made this many times in our training camps, both salt chanko and miso chanko. *Ah, that brings back memories.*

Having Sebastian carry the pot for me, I picked up the rice tub and went to the dining room.

“You’ve changed, milady.”

“Have I? I can’t really tell.”

“You used to lack confidence. Now the strength at your core is plain for all to see.”

“Thank you, Sebastian.”

Perhaps it was thanks to recalling my past life, but I hadn’t brooded over

things for a good while. Perhaps my mental center of mass had shifted low together with my physical one. Whatever the reason, it had become very easy for me to live.

Stepping into the dining room, I saw my father having a pleasant chat with the prince. Sitting at the same table were Yustin, Lord Clifton, and former general Maurilio. I placed a magic portable stove on the table, then the pot of chanko on top of it.

“Oh, there she is. Let’s get eating already, Coach.”

“Be patient, Clifton, and wait for it to boil.”

“Oho... You made this, Floortje?”

“Yes, father. I learned to cook at school.”

“Wow, I thought they didn’t teach you anything useful in that place. Guess there were practical subjects too.”

Well, they actually don’t... I put rice in my bowl while waiting for the chanko to boil.

“Wow, it’s all white. What is this, Floortje?” asked the prince.

“It’s rice. The staple food of the legendary Mount Hōrai.”

“Huh. Ah, the smell!”



Watching the prince sniff the rice was quite soothing. It was such a precious sight. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Hm, it’s kinda tasteless...? Or maybe not salty enough.”

“Manners, apprentice!”

“There’s little flavor. I don’t get this,” said Lord Clifton, gobbling up his rice with a fork.

“It’s not meant to be eaten alone. You eat it together with chanko. It’s like bread.”

“So it’s a staple food, huh? That’s unusual.” The former general was staring at the rice, eyes full of curiosity.

“Floortje, is the stew in that pot the main thing on the menu?”

“It’s not stew, father. This is called ‘chanko.’”

“That’s quite the smell. Has a way of stirring your appetite.”

“It’s not like the chanko we’ve been eating until now, is it?”

“Today we made it with miso. There’s plenty of local seafood thrown in too,” I explained.

Although the local port was mainly used for commerce, it was a fishing port too. It saw high volumes of fish and shellfish caught every day. I’d had Adela visit the market and buy us some cod, shrimp, and scallops.

The chanko started to simmer, its fragrance filling the room. I opened the lid and filled my bowl. I wished we could all be sticking our chopsticks in there together, but sadly, the locals had no such custom.

“Itadakimasu.”

“What does that mean, Floortje?”

“It’s what sumo wrestlers say before a meal, Your Highness.”

“Oh. Itatakimasu, then.”

Even his mispronunciation was so cute I could practically melt. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Mm, nom nom, it’s hot but, nom, delicious.”

“Do you like it, father?”

“Yes—it tastes like bouillabaisse, but not quite. I’m not sure how to describe it,” said father as he drank the broth.

“Wow, this is good stuff, Coach.”

“Nom nom, wow, delicious. I didn’t know you had such talents, Coach.”

I was a little worried since my students hadn’t tried chanko made with miso before, so it was a relief to see it received quite well.

“Nom nom, it’s so hot and delicious. I’ve never had anything this good before, Floortje.”

“I’m glad you like it. Please eat a lot, Your Highness.”

“Oh, it’s even better if I eat it with rice! Amazing!”

It pleased me to see the prince devour chanko like that. *Mhm*. My father’s eyes seemed to say *Congratulations*, but it wasn’t what he was thinking. Not at all. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

After spending the night at the castle, it was time for the usual morning training. I summoned a large training room at the parade ground, containing five rings and a great multitude of teppo poles. Although I had about five thousand students who needed training, I trusted Yustin and the former general to teach them the basics, while I would personally train Prince Richie, Lord Clifton, and my elite unit of twenty.

We warmed up with splits and teppo. After that, we had practice bouts round-robin style, in which I promptly sent all my opponents outside the ring. Lord Clifton was getting better at sumo, but he couldn’t avoid his fate this time either. The prince lowered his stance and thrust at me. *Tap tap!* I liked his technique. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* But I brought him down with an *uwatenage*—an overarm throw. He looked so precious rolling on the ground.

I divided my students into two groups and we began battering practice. They were showing promise, their movements growing more proper by the day.

Once we were done with morning training, next up was morning chanko.

“Today it’s salt chanko. We ran out of miso yesterday, but I asked around and found a trader who had a barrel of it. So now there’s about enough to have miso chanko twice.”

“Thank you, Adela.”

“Oh, don’t mention it, eh heh heh...”

Salt chanko is still delicious. I savored the juiciness of scallops while enjoying the sight of everyone gulping down their food after training. It was as if we were living together and eating out of the same pot.

“This is so good! Are we out of rice?”

Unfortunately, there had only been enough rice for one meal, considering the size of my stable, so we were stuck with bread today.

“A ship arrives from Mount Hōrai tomorrow, so you should be able to buy some.”

“Hopefully the quality is good, because it can vary. I’d better be careful,” I replied.

“I don’t know, there’s not a lot of this grain in circulation. What about the rice you got as a prize—how was the quality?”

“It was top notch: Koshihikari rice from Uonuma in Niigata prefecture.”

“The packaging was all shiny too. I guess the rice was that special.”

The packaging was shiny because it was plastic. This world didn’t have plastic, which must’ve made it seem extraordinary.

Now that it was afternoon, it was time to rest and prepare to march on Fort Varian come morning, something which would likely take two days.

“Are you free, Your Highness?”

“Yeah, I don’t really have any plans. Why?”

“How about a tour? I could show you around the castle.”

“Wow, really?! Is that okay?”

“Hey, maybe I’ll tag along...”

In response to Lord Clifton’s alarming utterance, I made eye contact with Yustin and Maurilio.

“*Do it.*”

“*Yes, ma’am.*”

Such was our nonverbal exchange.

“Um, we could let him...”

“No, Your Highness, my apprentice has pressing matters to attend to.”

“Nghh...”

“They let him graduate out of pity, so he’s in need of supplementary lessons.”

“Nghh...”

Yustin bound the lord’s arms behind his back while the former general covered his mouth. They dragged him away. *Good, good.*

“Now then, why don’t we both take our showers and go for a walk around the castle? There’s plenty of fun things to see.”

“Okay, looking forward to it!”

His broad, childlike smile was too precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

After taking a shower and changing into my dress, I went to the VIP room to meet up with the prince. Adela opened the door for me, and stepping inside I saw him together with Sebastian. The prince was in a dress suit once worn by my older brother, looking smart and stylish.

“Wh-What do you think, Floortje?”

“Oh, it’s just wonderful. Haa... The war fan is held up, face it with a smile... ♪ With your opponent brought down to the ground, you are declared the winner... ♪”

The prince was looking so gallant I couldn’t help singing a sumo jinku. *Oh no, oh no. Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Okay. I’m glad, then. Your dress is gorgeous too!”

“Oh, Your Highness...”

He really was royalty. A natural lady-killer. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“So, shall we be off?”

“Okay, where are we going first?”

“Why don’t we visit the seaside park?”

“C-Can you see the sea from there? I’ve never seen it in my life!”

Indeed, the royalty of this kingdom would at most go to their highland villas for the summer. They didn’t travel around much. *Fine*, I thought. I would show Prince Richie the sea of this town I was born and raised in. As I set forth, pulling my companion by the hand, he looked up at our ditzy maid walking nearby.

“Oh, you’re coming with us, Adela.”

“Yes! Where milady goes, I go!”

Silence, yobidashi. Then again, a noble would never be seen walking around without a maid, so I had to put up with it. I needed someone to hold a parasol for me, anyway.

The three of us descended the imperial staircase and passed through the entrance hall. Outside, the skies were clear: perfect weather for a date. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

The sea lay to the south. A park had been built there for the townsfolk’s recreation.

“Yay, it’s the sea!!!”

Prince Richie ran to the water as soon as he saw it, kicking up sand on his way through the beach.

“Wow, it’s the sea, Floortje! And it’s so cold! Ah ha ha!”

Knee-deep in water, the prince scooped some up and splashed it around. Ah, he looked so precious, frolicking in the sun. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“I can’t see where the water ends! This is amazing, Floortje!”

“It doesn’t stop in the distant New World or at Mount Hōrai either,” I replied.

“Wow... The ocean is so wide.”



“...So free... ♪ The sun and the moon reflect on the sea... ♪” continued I, singing a famous Japanese children’s song as the prince spoke the first words of its lyrics.

“That’s a beautiful song. You seem to know many of those, Floortje.”

“I’m fond of songs.”

Taking off my high heels, I stepped into the water. The sand underfoot moved with the waves. It suddenly hit me that this wasn’t a setting requiring formal attire, so I could take my shoes off at will. *The thought of playing in the water with my favorite character... Such bliss.*

The water was clear. People bathed in the sea in this world too, so the beaches were very crowded in the summer. The wind carried the smell of seawater.

“Floortje, look, there’s fish! Can we eat it?!”

“Let’s see...ah, sardines. We certainly can.”

“All right! Ah, it swam away! It’s so fast!”

My ditzy maid showed up barefoot with rakes and a bucket. It occurred to me that these were for gathering clams at low tide. Certainly easier than catching fish, and they taste good too.

“Let’s gather clams, Your Highness.”

“Clams? Like what we had in chanko this morning? We can catch those?”

Feeling around the underwater sand with my foot, I borrowed a rake from Adela and dug up a clam. It was a *hamaguri*, also known as the common orient clam.

“W-Woow! That’s incredible! You’re amazing, Floortje! How did you do that?”

“Feel around the sand with your foot, and if you hit upon something use a rake to dig it up.”

He looked so precious searching the sand with his foot, his pants raised up to his knees. And that slender, precious foot... *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Is this it? Wow! This clam is so big!!!”

“Gather as many as you can, we’ll put them in chanko for dinner.”

“What, you mean you and Yustin and everyone will eat the clams I find?!”

“We will. I’m looking forward to it.”

“All right, I’ll gather all the clams there are!”

Full of enthusiasm, the prince began gathering hamaguri around him. I helped too. Before long, Adela’s bucket was full of them.

“We’re going to take a walk around the marketplace. You take these back to the castle.”

“Understood. See you at the market, then.”

We visited the summerhouse by the shore, where I cleaned the sand off my feet and put my shoes back on.

“We sure found a lot. I wonder if the ones I got will taste good...”

“I’m sure they will.”

Then I wiped the prince’s feet with a towel and put his socks on for him. *Those slender, precious legs... Dosukoi dosukoi!* I put on his shoes for him, after which we were ready to go.

“All right, off to the market we go.”

“The market? What do they sell there?”

“Fish, vegetables, meat...that sort of thing.”

“Okay, let’s go! I’ve never been to a market either, Floortje!”

Pulling the prince by the hand, I headed to the market. People we passed on the street bowed to us—many of the locals knew me since I had grown up here before moving away for school. It didn’t take long to reach our destination. The marketplace was abuzz, with deals happening left and right.

“Wow! Look, Floortje, there’s so much fish here! And it’s all different too!”

“That’s right. People eat a lot of fish in these parts, so you’ll see a high variety on sale.”

“Hey, Princess! Been a while, eh? They say you brought an army back home.”

“Hello, sir. It certainly has been a long time. Got any good fish for sale?”

“You bet. I got this fabulous goosefish this morning. Why don’t you take the liver at least?”

Goosefish would pair well with hamaguri in a soy sauce chanko. The locals only ate the liver of goosefish and either threw the rest away or fed it to cats. Such a waste.

“Bring three to the castle, would you?”

“You got it, Princess. Come again soon!”

Seeing the “scary” face of the goosefish, the prince gingerly tried to touch one before pulling away. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“So even fish can look scary. The world is full of surprises!”

“You will see many different worlds as you grow up, Your Highness.”

“Yes, you’re right... But I’m not sure I have the right to just push my brother away and become king, Floortje.”

“Let’s go to the hilltop park next.”

“Okay!”

I pulled the prince by the hand and left the marketplace. Although it was the capital of the marquisate, it was still only a fourth the size of the royal capital, so it didn’t take too long to walk around the whole thing. Strolling through the town, I spoke to the prince.

“Here’s what I think, Your Highness: even your relatives can do bad things.”

“Yeah...”

“Everyone has their own upbringing and various circumstances, and some are led to commit evil because of them.”

Climbing the hill, we passed by women with laundry who bowed to us.

“The miserable, the suffering, the ignorant—being compassionate towards them is a noble thing.”

“Right...”

“And as you are compassionate, Your Highness, I think I know how you saw this.”

“How, Floortje?”

“People who do bad things want someone to scold them.”

“Huh?” uttered the prince after a pause.

We arrived at the hilltop park. The view of the town was breathtaking. The ships coming and going in the harbor looked like toys.

“Woow!”

“This is the thriving port known as Hobbels.”

“It’s such a view! Like, wow!”

Mesmerized by the picturesque view of the whole town, the prince looked truly precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* He had the character for becoming king. He was far wiser and more prudent than Prince Jonas. Yet his heart was too tender. That was my only major concern.

“People who have done something bad are waiting for someone to punish them. Overlooking their transgressions is not kindness—it is indifference.”

“Oh. Maybe so...”

“It is. Prince Jonas has strayed from his path, deceived by Jaromíra. He kidnapped the king and was about to kill his own brother.”

“It’s highly unfortunate.”

“Be angry with him, Your Highness. Only you can bring him back on the right path. Nobody else.”

The prince gave a deep nod. My words must have resonated with him. I could see resolve in his eyes.

“I understand. I shall save my brother. I shall try him for his sins and deliver punishment. It is what he wants most, is it not?”

“Yes. Prince Jonas used to be a man of virtue. He has simply lost sight of the

right path this time. Rescue him, Your Highness.”

“Thank you, Floortje. With your help, I’ve made up my mind. As prince, I shall fight against my brother. Can I count on your aid?”

“Of course, Your Highness. I am but your humble servant.”

After giving another deep nod, the prince threw his arms around me.

“My beloved Floortje, I wish to make you queen. I-Is that okay?”

Ah, even the way he messed up his confession at the end was just precious! Too precious! I thought I would get a nosebleed! *Oh my, oh my!*

“Y-Your Highness, when you, um, turn sixteen, please propose to me again. Then I would be honored to accept.”

“Yay! You mean it?! I’m so happy, Floortje! Yaaay!!!”

I embraced his small body. He would probably be bigger by the time he turned sixteen. I would be twenty-two by then. Not half bad. Indeed, it wasn’t bad at all.

“Pine and bamboo decorating the gate... ♪ Ropes around its pillars... ♪ Give the Seven Lucky Gods beyond...your offering of kagami mochi... ♪”

“I like your songs. Could you sing more for me?”

As I ended up singing a jinku out of happiness again, the prince urged me to go on. Locked with him in an embrace before a flowerbed in the hilltop park, I sang one happy jinku after another for what felt like an eternity.

Fort Varian lay two days away from Hobbels. It sat on top of a rocky mountain, protecting the border with the neighboring Kingdom of Högman. We set up camp in a flatland nearby to scout the fort. *Now, how do we do this...?*

“The fort is impregnable. Its construction is recent and no part of it is in disrepair. Only two years ago, the Kingdom of Högman attempted a siege with thirty thousand troops to no success whatsoever,” explained Adela with her map spread on a folding stool.

Once again I had to wonder about the source of her military knowledge. She

hadn't been a Japanese military otaku in her previous life, had she?

"Stationed inside are two thousand Temple Knights, six thousand border guards, and a thousand knights of the royal guard. We have the advantage in numbers with our fifteen thousand, but it's not the triple numbers we'd need to lay siege to a fortress."

"You know a lot about this, Adela. When did you study warfare?"

"That's a secret, Your Lordship."

My father groaned in confusion. He was leading the five thousand troops from back home, although only two thousand of them would actually fight. The rest handled supplies, transportation, and engineering. With the regular army out of town, Hobbels was guarded by two thousand reservists under my brother's command. They wouldn't hold out against the royal army should it show up at our gates. Either way, it's not as if our numbers were as valuable as those of the fort's guards, since the vast majority of the latter would join the fight.

"I believe King Arvi is held here, in the west tower. Therefore, I suggest having an elite unit force their way through the rear gate, head straight for the west tower, and rescue the king."

"I see. May I ask why you think the king is held there, Adela?" asked Maurilio, ostensibly deep in thought.

"Only the west tower has windows that look clean. It would be unheard of to hold the king in a dungeon. The east tower is all dirty. And so, that makes the west tower the most likely option."

To my surprise, Adela had used her head.

Was the king really in the west tower? If it was a ruse, his life could be in danger. I wondered about my course of action.

"What are we going to do, Floortje?" asked the prince.

He was sitting on a commander's chair, but because he was too short, there was a mountain of cushions under him. Such a charming sight it was. *Dosukoi dosukoi!* I stood up.

“I shall force my way through the main gate, yokozuna style.”

“What?! Weren’t you listening, milady? Even a sumo master like you couldn’t possibly get through the main gate! Please rethink this!”

“Don’t worry, Adela, I have sumo!”

“Milady!!!”

Oh, be quiet, yobidashi. Sieging a border-guarding fort would be a fool’s errand without sumo.

“So what exactly is the plan, Coach?”

“I will hurl boulders over the walls.”

“Huh? Please, milady; even with your ridiculous strength, you couldn’t possibly throw those boulders on top of that mountain. Anyone got any better ide—” Before Adela could finish, I sneaked up on her from behind and pulled on her cheeks. “It herts, it herts, meledy!”

“But Coach, just how are you going to throw them?”

“I’ll use the Maglev Triple Attack Force Out, Yustin.”

“That skill you used to send Maurilio flying, huh?”

“That’s the one.”

I thought the boulders might start gaining attributes through sumo, but I needn’t have worried. After using the dressing room to put on my mawashi on top of my dress, I performed a triple attack force out on a boulder and, as I had hoped, a maglev track manifested underneath, sending the boulder flying at supersonic speeds.

“That’s a pity, milady. It went to the right.”

“It’s hard to aim at the gate because boulders vary in shape so much.”

With the troops deployed, Adela and I stood at the front, wrestling with boulders.

“Maglev, Triple, Attack, Force Out!!!”

I kicked the boulder, swept it off its feet with my arm, and pushed with my head, causing a sparkling maglev track to appear. For a brief moment, I was able to adjust the track. And then, I pushed!

The supersonic boulder raced through the air before crashing into the walls of the fort.

“That’s a hit! But it needs to go a little to the right.”

Beyond a dense cloud of dust, a crack in the wall could be seen.

We were standing on the plains below the fort, all fifteen thousand of us. The sunlight in such a desertlike place was merciless. Four of my elite rikishi brought over the next boulder. *Much appreciated.*

“Maglev, Triple, Attack, Force Out!!!”

Just like before, I kicked the boulder, swept it off its feet with my arm, and pushed with my head, causing a sparkling maglev track to appear. Racing through the air, the boulder crashed into the fort again.

“That’s a hit on the gate! A part of the frame just broke off.”

“Seems like it.”

It looked like I could bring the gate down with a few more.

“Maglev, Triple, Attack, Force Out!!!”

A third time, I kicked the boulder, swept it off its feet with my arm, and pushed with my head, causing a sparkling maglev track to appear. Racing through the air, the boulder crashed into the fort once more.

“Yet another hit on the gate! Wow, there’s a gap now!”

“All right. With another two or three...”

Bam! The gate opened from the inside, and a group of Temple Knights stepped through. Behind them was a furious Jaromíra.

“What the hell is this?! Why are you throwing boulders, Floortje Hobbema?! Are you out of your mind?! Who *does* that?!”

Lord Clifton showed up from behind me.

“All right, Coach—hurl one at her too!”

His words evidently scared Jaromíra, as she let out a shriek and crouched behind one of the knights.

“Well, Clifton, that’s a little...dangerous.”

I didn’t see this technique as one meant to be used on people.

“Your evildoing ends today, Floortje! Fall to your knees in the face of my secret technique! ‘Crusade!’”

With that, Jaromíra began casting some spell, and an enormous aura formed under the knights’ feet.

“This looks bad, milady! ‘Crusade’ is a ritualistic spell of the church, a powerful buff to those who believe in the goddess! It doubles their attack, halves their defense, and on top of that affects them with ‘Heightened Morale,’ ‘Empty Head,’ ‘Reduced Fatigue,’ and ‘Pain Suppression!’”

This yobidashi was strangely knowledgeable as always. Even the Natori logo swaying on her back seemed to be an element of pride for her.

“Thanks, Adela. Rikishi, charge!!!”

“Yeah!!!” came from my twenty titans as they followed my lead.

Ahead, the Temple Knights marched towards us. They reminded me of zombies I had seen in fiction in my past life.

“Rikishi! Shiko!”

“Yes, ma’am!” shouted my elites, before each raised his leg up high and brought it down with force.

Stomp! Alas, there was no effect. The knights pressed on in silence, spears and swords in hand.

“Oh ho ho ho ho! You are such a fool, Floortje! Ritualistic magic of the church has the holy attribute! Your shiko of the same attribute won’t do anything against it! Now, my knights, cut down that contemptible enemy of the church and her disgusting loincloth squad!”

“As you wish!”

Alarmingly, the knight at the front picked up speed and came swinging his longsword. *Slap!* Performing harite on his sword-bearing wrist, I closed the distance and initiated a grapple.

I stuck a hand under his armpit. *Whoosh*. Then I made him lose balance and threw him to the side. *Whooosh!*

“Tornado Beltless Arm Throw!”

A tornado swept the grouped-up knights up in the air before bursting.

“...”

Even though they had just fallen down, all of them got up again with empty expressions on their faces. *Kgh!* Evidently, I couldn’t make them lose consciousness or break their morale while this “Crusade” ability was in effect. There was no dohyō either, so there were no penalties for falling.

“Ho ho ho ho! How do you like that, Floortje?! Your sumo ends here!” Jaromíra roared with laughter as she spewed derision at us. “Now kill her! Slaughter her! Exterminate that heretic and bring about the pure world of the goddess!!!”

“Yes, ma’am!!!”

Taking up their spears and swords again, the Temple Knights drew near. *Is it all over?!*

“You are disqualified!!!”

Suddenly, a shrill voice rang in my head. And clearly not just in mine, because everyone including the Temple Knights was holding their ears.

“You hear me speak directly into your minds. I am Florence, the goddess of love and war.”

A “What?!” could be heard from just about everywhere.

Light gathered between those on my side and the knights, and in the most divine manner, a fair-haired lady came into being, clad in a radiant toga.

“You are disqualified, Jaromíra! On accounts of your having sex with a man you don’t love, using light magic to charm men for your own gain, and

employing ‘Crusade’—a spell intended strictly for sacred purposes—to try to hurt someone, I, the goddess of love and war, am revoking your right to sainthood!”

“What?!” came from everywhere once again.

The woman who claimed to be Florence, the goddess of love and war, ran past the knights.

“Wh-What are you talking about?! Th-This is all the work of the devil! The Demon Lord’s schemes! S-Somebody stop her!!!”

Some knights stood in Florence’s path, but she had no intention of stopping.

“Reagins, I know you’ve been spending every night wishing for your sickly mother to recover. I’m going to grant that wish right now, so step aside this instant!”

“Y-Yes, Goddess! Ahh, it’s the real goddess!”

“Shut up, out of my way!!!”

I was a little surprised to see the goddess kick aside that knight whose name was apparently Reagins. But the force of that kick was certainly befitting of a goddess of war. At some point the effects of “Crusade” had worn off, and the knights had all sat down, brought their hands together, and begun chanting their prayers to the charging goddess, who was by now close to Jaromíra.

“G-G-G-Goddess, d-don’t you think it’s against the rules to just c-come out in person like that?! I mean, aren’t gods supposed to leave mortals to their own business—don’t you take pride in that?”

“Take this!!!” shouted Florence, summoning a large glowing paper slapstick fan. “SAINTHOOD REVOKED!!!”

SLAP!

“Aaaaahhh!!!”

The holy slapstick fan sent Jaromíra flying away, spinning in midair.

“All right!”

Florence seemed very pleased with the result. Then she turned to me.

“You can handle the rest, right?”

“Wait a moment.”

In reaction to my words, Florence held her hands over her ears and ran with short steps towards my rikishi unit.

“Aaahhh, I can’t hear anything, we heavenly beings must not chitchat with mortals!”

“You just hit Jaromíra pretty hard, though!”

“She’s an exception. A snake like her deserves it, so it’s completely fine! Yep, no problems here at all!”

Florence ran, and I gave chase. My rikishi stepped out of the way.

“Slow down and explain yourself!”

“Aaahhh, aaahhh, there’s nothing to explain. This world was coming apart because I accidentally made some idiot reincarnate here, so I negotiated with the god of a world that had a warrior school named ‘Valhalla’ to reincarnate someone from there into this world, and at first everything was going smoothly, but when a holy power goes up against another holy power things get really crazy, and so I totally didn’t come out just to do something about that!!!”

“You obviously did!”

Suddenly, Florence swerved while running between my rikishi. When I got to the spot where I’d last seen her, I couldn’t see her anywhere. There was only my ditz of a maid standing around.

“Did you see a strange goddess run past just now?”

“N-No, no, I haven’t seen anyone. A goddess? You must be joking, milady, come on, ah ha ha ha ha!”

“Where did that useless goddess go...? Sheesh.”

There was simply no way it was Adela. Even my ditzzy maid didn’t deserve to be compared to *that*. And so, I had evidently let the goddess escape. Too bad: I was going to have her sit in the *seiza* position for about an hour and apologize.

Oh wait—we’re still at war here. I hurried back to the front of my rikishi unit.

“Huh...?”

That’s when I saw all the knights were prostrating themselves.

“We’re sorry!”

“Uh...”

“That accursed, wicked Jaromíra fooled us all. Goddess Florence has made that abundantly clear. Ah, what have we done?!” The one who seemed to be their leader broke down crying.

“Speaking of which, where *is* Jaromíra?”

Looking around, I spotted her on a horse, galloping along the highway, away from the fort. *Damn, she’s quick to escape.*

“Three kilometers west down that highway and she’ll reach the road that leads to the royal capital.”

I considered if I should go catch her or proceed with taking the fort.

“We, the order of 1842 Temple Knights serving the goddess, surrender to Prince Richie.”

“I accept your surrender, knights. Submit to my army.”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

The leader of the knights fell to his knees before the prince. His order was a group of elites: it would be good to have them on our side.

Clap clap clap clap! With the rapid beating of wooden clappers, an “alert” appeared in red. *A strong opponent has appeared (rank: ōzeki)!* The gate of the fort opened, and a small-built man stepped through. *That* was a holder of the second highest rank? The table of rankings identified him as Dmitry Kazantsev of Odell City.

“You put me in a bind, Lady Floortje. With the saint driven off, I’m forced to enter the fray.”

I was looking at a skinny old man. He most certainly didn’t appear strong. Was he a master of some martial art?

“*You* will be fighting, Dmitry?”

“Oh, you know my name? I suppose I should expect no less from you, Lady Floortje,” said Dmitry with a pleased smile on his face. “But no, I will not be your opponent. That will be he.”

The man pointed at the sky. I could see a lizard-like silhouette high above. It grew larger and larger until a scarlet dragon landed on the plains. It was massive: in front of me stood a vicious red dragon the size of a three-story building.

“Now, Your Highness. Surrender if you do not wish to be burnt to a crisp,” said Dmitry with a bright smile on his face.

The man must have been a beast tamer!

“Come forth, big game dohyō!”

An extra large ring thirty meters in diameter rose out of the ground. Magic truly is a convenient thing.

“M-Milady, wh-wh-wh-what are you doing?!”

“Oh, be quiet. Sumo, what else? Hurry up and announce, Adela.”

“Th-This is plain reckless! You can’t possibly do sumo with a dragon! Let’s make a show of surrendering here, then sneak through the night and put Mr. Graybeard over there to eternal sleep!”

“I can hear you, maid.”

The beast tamer Dmitry was observing from a ringside seat. Once again, the audience seating was quite abundant: my fifteen thousand troops filled the box seats, eating boxed lunches and drinking sake. *Enjoy the show, everyone.*

“Nobody would seriously duel an enormous beast summoned by a tamer! You realize this is a dragon, right? A dragon! You can’t fight it with martial arts!”

“Nothing is impossible for sumo!”

“I’m pretty sure it has its limits...”

“Announce already!”

Adela reluctantly climbed the dohyō under the blank stare of the dragon.

“On the east, Floortje, Floortje... On the west... What’s the dragon’s name,

sir?”

“Phalaris. What are you trying to do there? He only responds to my commands.”

The yobidashi raised her voice.

“On the west, Phalaris, Phalaris...”

“Wh-What?!”

Perplexity written on his face, the dragon entered the ring, each step a loud thud.

“Can you hear me, Phalaris?”

The dragon inquisitively pointed his minicar-sized head my way.

“You and I are about to fight one-on-one. The rules are simple: you lose if you touch the ground with anything other than the soles of your feet, or if you step outside the ring.”

Conveniently, this dragon was bipedal. I would’ve felt bad forcing him to do sumo had he walked on four legs. Upon closer inspection, the beast was quite the looker. His red scales were shining in the sun. The overall impression was of a splendid, imposing dragon, quite out of this world. Horns grew from his virile, savage-looking face. On his back were rugged spines and large wings. The dragon’s well-proportioned figure was magnificent. It also bore an inscription, covering his body from chest to stomach. Tamers used such seals to enslave beasts.

“Hwah hwah hwah! Surrender now, foolish Floortje, lest you wish for that dragon to roast you alive.”

“He’s welcome to try, Dmitry, but he won’t be able to fight me for about a month after that, since attacking before the start of the bout is a breach of the rules.”

“Wh-What?!”

“Sumo has already begun.”

“Damn it—is that the power of ritualistic spells?!”

Clap clap clap clap! came the rhythmical beating of wooden clappers.

Adela led a group of translucent yobidashi around the ring, each carrying a sponsor's prize banner. This process took a while, given the size of today's dohyō. After that, a referee climbed its steps.

"Phalaris. As per the rules, you will need to touch the ground with your front limbs once at the start of the bout, but doing it afterwards will lead to your loss. You can't touch it with your wings or tail either," explained I while throwing salt on the ring.

"Mgh."

Phalaris nodded. He seemed to understand human speech. *What an intelligent dragon*, I thought.

"Face each other."

The dragon and I stared each other down. His eyes were about the size of my upper half. That huge mouth was big enough to gobble me up in one go.

I wondered if this was going to work as a sumo bout. Since I was only as tall as the dragon's ankles, we couldn't grapple. Was I to run around avoiding his attacks while launching harite catapults? No, that wouldn't be sumo. I could see myself using *izori* or *shumokuzori*, the regular backwards body drop and the bell hammer backwards body drop respectively, although this could just as well see me trampled. In the end, I decided to go for pushing sumo, the origin of all sumo techniques, while relying on my sumo spirit operating at maximum capacity.

"Face each other."

The air between me and the dragon grew tenser by the moment. We touched the lines on the ground with our fists at the same time. I got up and charged.

"Hakkeyoi!"

It was a first for me, running and running under my opponent and still not reaching their body. The dragon moved to swing his talons at me before suddenly freezing up.

"No! No talons! You'll touch the ground!" shouted Dmitry to help his fighter.

Not bad, gramps. Taking the opportunity, I grappled the dragon's leg. It was like a large tree... Suddenly, a flash of inspiration: I could use teppo! I took a deep breath and aimed at the dragon's leg: teppo, teppo, teppo! *Bam! Bam! Bam!*

"RAAAWR!!!"

With each strike, the leg wobbled and slid back. It was working! *Teppo, teppo, teppo!*

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

Bam! Bam! Bam! My shouts naturally ended up quite unladylike. Not that I cared. For I was an undaunted sumo wrestler!

Phalaris lifted his right leg, which was under my assault, then brought it down on the ground, aiming for me. *Booom!* The power of the dragon's shiko rivaled that of a bomb! But I was unhurt, since I had managed to shuffle my feet along the ground quickly enough to get out of the way. Thus the plan was to keep dodging and performing teppo till victory was mine.

"Oh, you quick little...! Phalaris, fire breath!"

"Gwah!!!"

The dragon faced upwards, inhaling a large volume of air. Things were looking bad: I didn't have a way of dodging a direct fire-breath attack in the ring! It would be too effective! I boosted my sumo spirit. My leg shuffling could now compete with speed skating in swiftness.

"Hffff!"

An unbelievably hot mass of air hit a part of my body. Dragons' flame breath had a way of inspiring awe. I moved around the ring as fast as I could, the stream of fire hot on my heels.

"Still in, still in!"

The referee was blocking the fire with his war fan. I had no idea it could be used in such a manner! Juicing up my sumo spirit some more, I picked up speed: an indispensable part of the strategy for anyone hoping to defeat an oversized opponent. Even shuffling my feet in a low stance, I was fast. Because how does

a lean wrestler beat a bigger and stronger opponent? With speed, that's how!

Once I had made my way behind the dragon, the fire stopped, perhaps due to line-of-sight issues. As he perked up his tail to keep it from touching the ground, I approached his back ankle and—teppo! *Bam!*

“RAAAAAAWR!!!”

Phalaris looked like he was about to lose his balance, but managed to spread his legs farther apart and plant them firmly on the ground.

“Still in, still in!”

Oh, wait! I suddenly remembered that dragons generally fly, which meant their legs shouldn't see too much use and thus couldn't be very strong! It was an important realization: if I kept performing teppo on one leg, it could bring about my victory! I dashed to the dragon's left leg while he was busy spinning in place, searching for me. Shuffling my feet along the ground trying to stay in his blind spots, I soon reached my target, stretched my body to reach the dragon's calf, and then—teppo! *Bam!*

“GWOAAAAAH!!!”

Screaming, the dragon lost his balance. Another hit! Teppo! *Bam!*

“GROAAAAAH!!!”

It was falling!

“You did it, Coach!”

“That was amazing, Floortje!”

“I expected more from you...” spoke the beast tamer.

“Ah...”

Suddenly, a gust of wind blew over me. *Flap flap!* The dragon had spread his wings and taken flight to readjust himself.

“You don't need to fight her on the ground, Phalaris! Just burn her from above!” shouted Dmitry.

The referee froze up at the sight of the dragon gaining altitude. What did the rules have to say about this?

“S-Still in!”

He was...? Well, I had to admit, the dragon wasn't outside of the ring, nor had he touched the ground. A glowing wall appeared along the edge of the ring, stretching from the ground all the way into the sky.

“Phalaris, it looks like you're fine if you don't touch that wall! Fly carefully and rain fire from high above!”

The dragon nodded and started to gather air in his lungs. Time for some anti-air measures! A crosshair with a circle around it appeared within my field of vision over my opponent's head. The words *Target Locked* appeared in red.

“Witness my sniping technique—harite catapult!!!”

Boom! A palm-shaped shock wave was propelled at the dragon's head. *Bonk!*

“Agh, that wasn't strong enough!” came from the audience.

“That thing has one thick skull!”

“Ha ha ha! Even a ballista couldn't pierce a dragon's skin! Did you think your little shock wave would do anything?”

From all the way up there, my opponent could hit me anywhere on the ring. There were no blind spots! As the dragon lowered his head and opened his mouth wide, a light could be seen inside.

“MRFFFFFFFFF!!!”

Flames coated the skies over the ring. The fire of a dragon could instantly melt even iron, to say nothing of humans. *I have nowhere to run! It's going to cook me alive!*

“Watch out, Floortje!!!” I heard Prince Richie call out to me.

I wondered how I could stop a dragon's fire. Hide behind the referee? But the referee was standing far away. This was bad. *Real bad.* If only I could do a Tornado Beltless Arm Throw... Unfortunately, there was no target. Still, the moment I was engulfed in flames, I unconsciously performed the aforementioned technique as if someone had been standing right there in front of me.

Whoosh! As my sumo spirit revved up, wind began to blow around me, redirecting the flames. That was it! Even with nothing but air as the target, the move still activated its bonus effect! I did it some more. *Whoooooosh!* The wind spiraled into a tornado, consuming and blowing away another cloud of flame.

“S-Still in, still in!”

Just a little more! Another beltless arm throw, and another tornado. I could do this all day! One beltless arm throw followed another, then again, and again, until there were five of them, howling as they circulated the ring.

“GHWAAAAAH!!!”

Phalaris bellowed, his escape cut off. *Oh, I can control tornadoes with my mind?* It had taken me a while to realize they were magical in nature. With all five of them pinning the dragon, it looked as though it had been crucified.

“GWOOOOOAH!!!”

All right! Another beltless arm throw, another tornado. This time, I had it engulf my feet, and with some skillful manipulation, I went soaring into the sky.

“I’m coming for you, Phalaris! It’s time for Aryakan Air Sumo!!!”

As I gained altitude, the ring below looked smaller and smaller. I flew over the dragon, farther up. It was time to test a new technique. Taking aim at my opponent’s forehead and spreading my hands from atop the tornado, I dove down.

A meteor came falling through the skies, and its name was Floortje. I was a bullet, diving straight at the dragon’s forehead.

“One Meteoric Backward Force Down, coming right up!!!”

Kaboom!!!

“GROOOOOAH!!!!”

Kaboom!!! Kaboom!!! I had unleashed a triple attack on that forehead, utilizing magic and gravity. In the same moment, I purged the tornadoes holding Phalaris in place, causing him to come crashing down while spinning in midair. THUD! Smashing into the ground headfirst hard enough to create a crater, the dragon ended up half-buried in the dohyō.

“Floortje!” Standing on the edge of the destroyed ring, the referee raised his war fan at me.

The victory was mine!

The inscription on the dragon’s chest came peeling off. Oh my. It appeared sumo had broken the dragon’s connection with his tamer. Did it spell danger for us? His body gradually shrank until it made an odd sound and smoke started coming out.

“How was that fair?! That was no martial arts—that was magic!”

Where Phalaris had stood a moment ago was now a stark-naked young boy with white hair and tanned skin, his frustration clear as day.

“Grappling simply wasn’t possible due to the difference in size.”

“Here—I’m in human form so let’s have a proper fight! I may be small now, but I’m just as strong!”

The boy tried to come at me, but stopped halfway.

“What is this?! Gghhh!”

“Wait, you’re really Phalaris?”

“Yeah! I can’t move, though!”

“How did you turn into a human?”

“I dunno, I lost at your ‘sumo’ and suddenly I was able to! Owwww!”

“Oh, okay. Well, I’m glad I got the chance to speak to you, Phalaris.”

“Let’s fight, Floortje!”

A spirited, tanned shota dragon. Wild and in his birthday suit. How precious.
Dosukoi dosukoi!

“If you lose in sumo, you aren’t allowed to fight until the next tournament.”

“Man, are you kidding me...?”

As Phalaris sat down on the ground, Prince Richie climbed the dohyō and extended a hand to him.

“You should learn sumo from Floortje like the rest of us.”

“And who are you supposed to be?”

“I’m Richie, one of Floortje’s students in sumo. Care to join me?”

“Phalaris. Would that let me fight her, then?”

“Yes, any time,” I replied.

Under the pretext of practice matches, one was free to fight another as much as they wanted in my stable. And I was definitely curious how strong Phalaris would be in his human form.

“Fine, then I’ll join.”

“Welcome to the Floortje stable, my new student.”

“S-Sure. Hope this works out.”

“We’re fellow students now, so let’s be friends.”

“I-If you say so, Richie.”



Ah, two pretty boys talking to each other with a backdrop of gorgeous roses behind them was truly a feast for the eyes. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

Prince Richie had made a friend his age. Not that I knew how old Phalaris exactly was, but the mental age of the two appeared to be roughly the same.

A mawashi came floating down from above. It was the same shade of red as Phalaris's skin in his dragon form.

"Yustin, Clifton, help him put it on."

"You got it."

"They just keep coming, don't they, Coach?"

"Wh-Why are you two being so casual?"

"Why do you think? We're your seniors in this!"

"Now let's put this thing on you, you're gonna like it."

"This thing? Well... I like the color, I guess. It's the same as my scales."

The boy looked quite handsome with that scarlet mawashi on him.

"Phalaris..."

Dmitry got up from his ringside seat and climbed the dohyō. It was hard to traverse in the wake of a giant body having crashed into it, though.

"Oh, hey, Pa! Our connection was broken—can you make another one?"

"Dear goodness, you're in human form! I cannot believe my eyes!" spoke Dmitry as he gave the boy a tight hug. "Am I dreaming? Oh, Phalaris..."

"I guess I couldn't transform because the seal was in the way, Pa."

"Are you willing to call me that?"

"Of course. I'm glad I can finally talk to you."

Dmitry prostrated himself before Prince Richie, tears in his eyes.

"Audacious as it is after making an attempt on your life, Your Highness, I beg you, please spare Phalaris. Take my life instead."

"You can't die, Pa! How will I live without you?!"

Faced with Dmitry pleading for Phalaris's life, the prince looked puzzled.

"We're already friends with Phalaris, so I wouldn't kill him."

"Your Highness..."

"Of course you wouldn't! I knew you were a decent guy, Richie!"

"As for you, Dmitry, your surrender is enough. Plus, you're my friend's father."

"Your Highness! Ah, you are so merciful!" Dmitry broke down in tears, his face on the ground. "Your Highness, I humbly offer you this old body of mine, whatever use it may have left, as well as Phalaris."

"Sure, but I'm already in Floortje's stable, since I'm going to learn sumo, Pa."

"Good, good, have them teach you all sorts of things."

"So, can you put that seal on me again? I'll miss being able to talk to you inside my mind."

"Don't be foolish, Phalaris! What if it left you unable to transform into a human again? Besides, we can talk normally just as well!"

"Oh, I guess so!"

The pair smiled at each other. They were such a nice father and son. It was a lovely sight.

The gates of Fort Varian opened again, and a group of soldiers passed through, escorting a man in resplendent clothing.

"Ah, father! Father!!!"

Prince Richie waved his hand. The king was preceded by an officer of apparent high rank, although it didn't look like a prisoner-escort type of situation. Said officer approached the prince, knelt in front of him, and bowed.

"The garrison of Fort Varian yields to you, Your Highness."

"Very well. But why?"

"We couldn't possibly defeat an army with a hero capable of besting a

dragon. Especially not after our saint got punished by the goddess. Please show mercy to my troops, Your Highness.”

“Of course. There’s no problem if you’re not standing in our way. We’re fellow Aryakans, aren’t we?”

“Ahhhh, you are so magnanimous, Your Highness!”

The commander of Fort Varian’s garrison was in tears. At some point, soldiers crying had become a common sight.

“Father!!!” The prince ran up to King Arvi, wrapping his arms around him.

“Richie. We are most grateful for our rescue.”

“I didn’t do anything, it was all her—Floortje did all the fighting.”

I curtsied to the king.

“Oh, it is you! We saw you from the west tower, bringing down that dragon barehanded. You are a stalwart warrior, and yet your frame is slender and fair. We commend you, Lady Floortje, daughter of Marquis Hobbema.”

“It is a great honor, Your Majesty.”

With the king now rescued, I intended to waste no time in laying siege to the royal castle.

Adela was shouldering a straw basket for carrying earth, along with a bunch of translucent yobidashi.

“What are you up to, Adekichi?”

“‘Adekichi’? What kind of nickname is that?!”

“Yobidashi often have names like Daikichi and Kōkichi, so you’re Adekichi now.”

“I don’t want such a name!”

“Don’t be so petty, Adekichi. So, what are you up to?”

“Please don’t call me that! I’m fixing the ring before the award ceremony because you sent a dragon crashing into it!”

Oh—the award ceremony. Of course. Without that, I wouldn't have been able to get miso or rice. Although the prize money was nice too. However, while the yobidashi were hard at work, it was certainly going to take time to fix this ring. I had an idea.

“Begone, big game dohyō!”

And with it going back into the ground...

“Come forth, dohyō!”

...I could simply get us a regular-sized one instead.

“Good thinking, milady! Hooray!”

“Don't mention it, Adekichi.”

“You're dead set on using that, aren't you?”

Ho ho ho.

“Before the award ceremony, we shall face the dohyō and sing the national anthem. Everyone, please rise.”

And rise they did. Including those in the box seats, there were about twenty-four thousand people: a sight to behold. As Adekichi and other yobidashi busied themselves carrying trophies and other preparations, a solemn tune started playing.

“Wow, this is quite the ceremony.”

“This is how every sumo tournament ends, father.”

The king, standing nearby, was clearly impressed too.

“Born at dawn on the continental plains, we run and fight for our fatherland...
♪”

“Though the blood of our comrades may be spilt at the border fort, or they may fall in battle... ♪”

“We shall keep invaders at bay and guard the glory of our nation... ♪”

The lyrics were pretty violent compared to those of the Japanese national

anthem, but still paled in comparison to those of the French one. The sound of twenty-four thousand people singing at once was overwhelming. I liked national anthems: they had a way of sobering you up.

I climbed the dohyō when Adela called me over. The former yokozuna was there once again. *Thank you as always.*

“Floortje Hobbema! You are awarded with this certificate attesting to your splendid performance in the tournament at Fort Varian on the 7th of July.”

I accepted the certificate and passed it to Adekichi. Then came a big trophy, which I passed to Yustin.

“Thank you as always, sir,” I said to the yokozuna.

“I see you’ve been working hard lately,” he replied. “May you persist in your efforts.”

“Yes, sir! Thank you kindly!”

The former yokozuna had spoken to me! What a happy occurrence.

After that came numerous awards from translucent people. Some of them were the same as last time: an acrylic bottle with shiitake mushrooms, a glass trophy cup, miso, rice, soy sauce. But there were new ones too: one of them was an enormous green macaron from President Chirac. It wasn’t food, though, rather a cushion to sit on. However, the extra prizes included macarons with edible gold leaf, and I looked forward to trying those. Thus, I had once again received a large collection of trophies by the end of a tournament.

“That was a fine ceremony, Miss Floortje,” spoke King Arvi.

“Thank you, Your Majesty.”

“We wonder if there is a way we would be able to take part in a sumo event as well.”

“Do you wish to learn sumo?”

“Well, our age might make that difficult...”

A translucent referee approached us.

“Would you like to be a gyōji like me, Your Majesty?”

“Oh, you can understand us?”

“Floortje has recently introduced a great number of people to sumo. Thanks to that, I am now able to do many things.”

“I see.”

“And what are the duties of a ‘gyōji’? Is it something we are able to do?”

“A gyōji is a referee in sumo. They pass judgment on who won the bout.”

“Tell us more.”

“Gladly. Please come with me.”

The king and the referee went for a walk around the dohyō, engaged in conversation.

“Hey, Floortje, let’s do sumo! I want to get mushrooms as awards too!”

“I like your enthusiasm, Phalaris. Keep it up.”

“Eh heh heh.”

Although Phalaris was the wild and spirited type, he was also cute. But I already had Prince Richie. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“Phalaris, let’s stop by the fort and find you something to wear,” offered the prince.

“Why? I like this mawashi.”

“Mawashi is only meant to be worn during sumo. Outside of that, you should wear something normal.”

“Hey, I’ll come with you,” joined in Lord Clifton.

“Oh, that helps, thanks. I have to say, the human world is really complicated.”

“You’ll get used to it in no time. Let’s go.”

Thankfully, Lord Clifton seemed willing to look after Prince Richie and Phalaris. Clearly, he was good with kids.

“Does this outfit suit us, Miss Floortje?” asked the king upon his return, wearing a referee uniform.

“It sits well on you, Your Majesty.”

The blue ceremonial robe gave the king a very dapper look. It suited him especially well since he was a little overweight. Evidently, he liked the war fan too, as he was swinging it around.

“Apparently, our name on the dohyō shall be Shōnosuke Kimura.”

The name that has always been used by the current highest-ranking gyōji?!
When I looked at the translucent referee standing beside him, he confirmed the king’s pronouncement with a solemn nod. And it was no wonder: the next tournament, held at the royal castle, was going to feature a match with the “west” yokozuna, Erhard.

The dohyō and the spectator seats sank into the ground, bit by bit. The translucent referee and all of the translucent yobidashi bowed to us and vanished. I could hear the sound of drums signaling the end of the tournament coming from somewhere...before I noticed Adekichi playing them.

It would take three days to reach the royal castle. *Citizens of the capital, your king is coming home...although he’s wearing a gyōji outfit.*

Interlude: At Aryaka's Royal Castle—in the Room with a Statue of the Goddess, in the Throne Room, and on the Veranda

The Royal Castle of Aryaka had a room with a statue of the goddess. A Temple Knight by the name of Ove could be seen instructing priests to move the giant statue elsewhere.

“What do you think you’re doing, Sir Ove?” asked Erhard, who happened to walk by.

“I cannot allow such a holy statue to remain in a place tainted by the presence of that sham of a saint. Until the king returns, it shall be placed in the custody of the temple.”

Erhard shook his head in apparent disapproval.

“That’s a fine thing to say, considering you were head over heels for the lovely Jaromíra last time I saw you.”

“And I’m terribly ashamed of that. Why did it take losing to Lady Floortje in sumo to notice I’d been brainwashed? How will I ever live this down? But regardless, what about you, Erhard?”

“I was never brainwashed in the first place. My nature wouldn’t allow it.”

“So you were assisting that vixen of your own free will.”

“That’s right. It aligned with my own plans.”

For a moment, Ove placed his hand on his longsword at his side. Then he let the tension drain from his shoulders and turned back to the priests, resuming his instructions.

“Oh? You’re not going to fight me?”

“There’s no need. Lady Floortje will take care of you.”

“Ha ha ha! With that ‘sumo’ game of hers? I cannot wait.”

“Hmph. When you learn just what sumo really is, you will know the meaning of dread, Erhard.”

“Daggers will make it a walk in the park.”

“Stay complacent like that. You’ll make it easy for Lady Floortje.”

With that, Ove went to help the priests carry the statue. Erhard only shook his head in disregard.

In the throne room, Prince Jonas was sitting on the throne, hanging his head.

“How did this happen, Erhard?”

“Oh? Whatever are you talking about, Your Highness?”

“You know full well what I’m talking about! Didn’t you tell me all I had to do was imprison Richie and the throne would be mine for the taking?”

“Yes, but even I didn’t expect Lady Floortje to gain that ‘sumo’ of hers.”

“My troops are deserting one after another. It seems they’re joining General Maurilio. The garrison of this castle is down to the five thousand royal guardsmen. How am I supposed to hold it with so few?”

“We seem to be in quite the bind. Shall we surrender?”

Prince Jonas took a heavy breath.

“An illegitimate prince like me who defied the king would no doubt be executed! Ah, what do I do...?”

“Then it seems we have to hold the castle.”

“But there’s no help coming...”

“If the siege lasts long enough, neighboring nations are bound to move in with their armies. Why not give them half of the country in exchange for their aid?”

“No way, that’s just...”

“You don’t want to die, do you? They haven’t left you any choice. And Jaromíra has been banished from sainthood, so you can’t count on her anymore.”

The prince glared at Erhard.

“Why did you do all this? Why did you sow chaos in Aryaka—why create all this unrest?!”

“Are you sure you should be saying such things, Your Highness? You sought the throne and Jaromíra wished to be queen. I haven’t done anything.”

“You planted the seeds of the rebellion!”

“Please don’t make such baseless accusations about me, Your Highness. I am not Lady Floortje.”

“Aah!!!” shouted the prince, clutching his head from atop the throne.

The smile on Erhard’s face looked artificial, as if he were wearing a mask.

Erhard stepped out onto the castle’s veranda. The rugged Varian mountain range could be seen in the distance, shrouded in mist.

“She even brought down a dragon with her ‘sumo’... What in the world could it be?” mused Erhard, gazing in the direction of the royal army’s expected approach. “We’ll hold the castle for a while and my father will send reinforcements. Just have to be patient.”

Lowering his eyes, Erhard took off his gloves. His left hand was covered in blue dragon-like scales.

“And here I was hoping to earn my father’s favor by seizing this land undamaged... What a mess...”

Hearing rapidly approaching footsteps, he put his gloves back on.

“Erhard!!! They’re coming! Floortje is coming to kill me with sumo!”

“Relax, my dear Jaromíra. As long as I breathe, I won’t let such a thing come to pass.”

Erhard smiled upon seeing Jaromíra the way she was now. No longer protected by the goddess, she had lost her divine beauty and was now hardly different from any ordinary girl on the street.

“You are my only hope, my beloved Erhard! Nobody understands you like I

do, Erhard, son of the Demon Lord!”

Erhard said nothing.

“I know how lonely you are, having been born from a union of demon and human. I’ll cure that loneliness, so protect me!”

“Of course, my beloved Jaromíra. You have my word—I’ll keep you safe from that wicked Floortje as long as I draw breath.”

Erhard wrapped his arms around Jaromíra in a firm embrace.

“Stupid girl...thinking you’re saving me because of what you saw in the game before your reincarnation. Once these lands are mine, you’ll be swimming in a ditch.”

His voice was too quiet to reach anyone’s ears, disappearing into the night as darkness gradually shrouded in its veil this castle replete with lies.

Chapter 4: Grand Finale: Sumo at Aryaka's Royal Castle

As Phalaris came at me, I met his charge head-on at the center of the ring. My high heels loudly slid along the ground as I was instantly pushed to the edge of the ring. *Impressive*. He had evidently kept his dragon's strength even in this form, just like he said. However, he had no technique, and his center of mass was too high. All it took was a leg trip and he went rolling out of the ring.

"H-Huh? Why? I don't get it."

"Strength alone isn't enough to win in sumo."

"Damn it! Let's go again!"

"Try fighting me, Phalaris."

"You? Sure, Yustin, I'm not gonna lose to you!"

A simple overarm throw, and Phalaris was on the ground.

"Are you kidding me?! I'm even weaker than you?!"

"I might not look like it," said Yustin, "but I'm an instructor of martial arts. Why don't you try my apprentice next?"

"Ha ha ha! There's no way this kid is gonna beat me," Lord Clifton proclaimed.

What ensued was a lengthy, epic bout, eventually resolving with Lord Clifton's defeat.

"I won! Hell yeah! I won!!!"

"I just let my guard down," said Lord Clifton. "Let's go another round, all right?"

"Sure! Man, sumo is fun!"

The next bout saw Lord Clifton take the win by the belt in a *tsuridashi*—a lift out. Phalaris's superhuman strength was of little use if he was held above

ground by his opponent.

“Try me next,” offered Prince Richie.

“Ehh,” said Phalaris, “you know I’ll win that one...”

“You never know until you try.”

“Well, I guess that’s true. Let’s go!”

Thus began the bout between Phalaris and the prince. The latter was surprisingly good at avoiding direct confrontation with the former’s phenomenal strength. *Wow, a pulling overarm throw?* The prince was a fast learner. *Bravo.*

“Wow, you’re good at sumo.”

“And you’re really strong.”

Two boys bonding on top of the dohyō was a deeply moving sight. Maximum preciousness. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

We were having our morning training in a ravine. It was a splendid sight: over five thousand recent additions to my stable all training at once. Prince Richie’s army had passed the twenty-thousand mark too, so by now it was like watching an entire town moving around.

Dmitry, Phalaris’s father, had joined the ranks of yobidashi. The back of his navy-blue happi coat had “Kibun” written on it.

“Dmitry, did you raise Phalaris since he was an egg?”

“That’s right. I snuck into a dragon’s nest when I was young, looking to steal an egg, but found a dragon devouring another dragon there. They must’ve had some dispute. The only intact egg I could find was my boy Phalaris.”

Now that’s a story.

“We’ve been together since. He helped me climb the ranks in my guild, and I’ve grown famous as a beast tamer.”

“Interesting.”

“But I’m old now, so I took that lucrative job from Prince Jonas to secure my retirement...and look where that got me. I’m glad things worked the way they

did, though, and so is Phalaris,” spoke Dmitry with happiness written on his face.

“He’s showing promise as a wrestler. I say we wait until the prince has to go to school, then have Phalaris join him.”

“You would do that for him?”

“Of course. He’s a friend of the prince.”

“Ohh, thank you, thank you...”

It’s not every day one gets to befriend a dragon in human form. I hoped their friendship would last for many years to come.

“Chanko is ready, everyone! Officers, please gather in the officers’ tent, everyone else proceed to the large tent!”

“Finally, some chanko! What’s the recipe today, Adekichi?”

“Don’t call me that, Phalaris. And it’s soy-sauce chanko.”

“Ah—the same as yesterday?”

“No, yesterday was salt. You’ve never had it before.”

“So the chanko will taste different! Man, I can’t wait! Let’s go, Floortje, Richie, Pa!”

“Sure...”

Our breakfast would be served in the officers’ tent. It had been a while since we left Hobbels, so there were no marine products on the table anymore. Instead, the soy sauce chanko had chicken in it. All of the officers gathered in the spacious tent.

“How are the recruits looking, Maurilio?”

“They’re doing pretty good. I can assign five to the elite rikishi unit, if you wish.”

“Please do it when you have time. I guess that makes twenty-five by now.”

“Gladly, Coach.”

We sat down at the table and dug into our hearty meal. It was a rich mixture

of broth with the taste of soy sauce, chunks of locally raised chicken, carrots, potatoes, and Chinese cabbage. We had it with bread, since the rice was gone after our recent celebration as well as the previous day. The people around me were big eaters, after all. I considered asking the translucent people to import some rice from their world.

“Wow, this is great! Man, the human world is amazing. Everything is so interesting, and the food is awesome!” exclaimed Phalaris, shoveling an extra large helping of chanko into his mouth.

“How did you live as a dragon? I’m sure you couldn’t just waltz into town.”

“Well, I lived on a mountain near one. Sure, I looked forward to Pa bringing me something nice to eat every now and then, but it was so boring.”

“I’m sorry about that, Phalaris.”

“Don’t worry about it, I know I was just huge. That’s why I’m so glad I can turn into a human now.”

“I’ll do what I can to show you more of the human world.”

“Sure, Richie! I wanna see lots of stuff!”

Once this breakfast was over, we would march on the royal capital and lay siege to its castle by the following day.

Called over by Adekichi, I went to her side. She spoke to me in a whisper.

“Can we do something about Phalaris? He’s eaten five entire pots already.”

“He *is* a dragon, I guess.”

Phalaris reminded me of the titular character from the manga series *Oba-Q*. I could only hope we didn’t run out of food before the king regained the throne and granted us financial support.

On the 10th of July, Prince Richie’s army reached Aryagard, the royal capital. The gates stood closed, and silence permeated the surroundings.

“The king has returned! Open the gates!”

Former general Maurilio shouted at the towers standing to the sides of the

gate, but no reply came. There wasn't even anyone in them.

"Permission to break through, Your Highness?"

"You can do that, Floortje? It's a tough gate."

"The natural course of action would be to send a scouting party over the walls and have them open the gate from the other side, milady."

Oh, be quiet, my military otaku yobidashi.

"Rikishi, to me!"

"Dosukoi dosukoi!"

Twenty-five rikishi certainly had a way of making an appearance. None of them wore anything besides a mawashi and a pair of sandals with leather soles. Such is a sumo wrestler's uniform.

"Your target is the city gate! Prepare to execute teppo!"

"Dosukoi dosukoi!"

Each took off his sandals. With me at their lead, they advanced to the large copper gate, shuffling their feet along the ground. Synchronizing their breathing, lowering their stances, and pouring their strength into their palms—they thrust!

"Strike!" shouted the unit in sync.

Bam!

"Strike! Strike! Strike!"

Bam! Bam! Bam! Creak! Creeeak!

Even the city gate couldn't avoid destruction at the hands of twenty-five elite rikishi. For there is nothing sumo cannot do. Thus, we made our way into the city. Silence presided over the streets—there wasn't a soul in sight. At least until I took a closer look at the windows of some of the houses: there were silhouettes behind the curtains. Our enemies were probably worried we might burn the city down.

King Arvi came forth on his mount.

“Citizens of Aryagard! ’Tis your king who speaks to you now! Let it be known that King Arvi has returned to his beloved people and wishes to see them! Did you suffer at the hands of Prince Jonas and Jaromíra? Then fear not, for your plight is now over!”

One by one, the citizens timidly began opening their doors and windows. One child ran up to the king, a flower in hand.

“Welcome back, Your Majesty.”

“We have most certainly returned, and from tomorrow onwards, this kingdom shall be back to normal,” spoke the king as he climbed off his horse and embraced the child.

“It’s the king! The true king is back...”

“This is the end for those who support Prince Jonas! King Arvi will reign once more...”

“I’m so glad to see you’re alive, my king.”

“What’s with that naked bunch? They look terribly imposing...”

The citizens started coming out little by little, nervous looks on their faces.

“Why the glum looks? Your king has returned! We wish to hear cheers, music, the anthem! Let us rouse the whole city, citizens of the capital!”

And make noise they did, proceeding to shout with excitement. An orchestra showed up seemingly out of nowhere and proceeded to play the tune of the national anthem, with the people singing along.

“King Arvi! King Arvi! King Avi!”

That’s a king for you, I thought. Overflowing with charisma and effortlessly making the people do his bidding.

“That was amazing, father!”

“Richie, this is the least you should be capable of when it comes time for you to take the throne.”

“I know—I’ll work on it!”

“Being able to incite the people is what makes one true royalty.”

Don't worry, Your Majesty. I see the makings of a virtuous ruler in your son. In my mind, Richie was sure to be far more revered than even his wise and glorious father. And I would protect him till the day I died.

"Now, citizens! Let us parade to the castle! Dance, litter the streets with flowers, and spread the word of our return!"

"King Arvi! King Arvi! King Arvi!" shouted the people.

They sang and danced as they walked in a procession through the main street. The rest of us followed along. Prince Richie's troops celebrated too, and often smiled and waved at the citizens. The road passed by the castle's moat. With the people's cheerful faces reflected in the water, it was almost like a festival. On our way, people stepped out of their homes to cheer for the king and wave their hats to celebrate his return. Confetti came swirling down. A gun salute colored the sky. Many orchestras came together to play the national anthem in a loop, and the people rejoiced. This day was sure to become a holiday, known as the day of the king's return.

Sir Ove appeared on a white horse.

"Oh, holy king! Those of the church have realized the error of their ways and submit to you. I, the captain of the order of Temple Knights, assume full responsibility. Arrest me!"

Waving to stop his cavalry from attacking the approaching Temple Knight, King Arvi let out a hearty laugh.

"Ove, you're back! Of course you would be, after the goddess herself made an appearance to revoke Jaromíra's sainthood. I don't imagine the church could follow her after all that."

"I am deeply ashamed of myself, Your Majesty. I shall bear no grudge if you order my immediate execution."

"Worry not. We would deeply resent losing someone as extraordinary as you because of some foolish saint. Once the day is done, you shall go to a rural church and spend a month in confinement, reflecting on your actions."

Ove raised his head in indignation.

“Your Majesty! I... My pride will not accept such a light punishment! I beg you for what I deserve, Your Majesty!”

“Ha ha ha! If you truly see us as your king, then obey our words. Your punishment shall be coming to terms with what you’ve done!”

Ove hung his head from atop his horse.

“It shall be as my king desires.”

“Right now, I need you to fight for us. Command your order to guard our rear.”

“Yes, Your Majesty! Temple Knights! We are joining the royal army! Guard the rear!”

“Yes, sir!” replied the knights, hurrying to take positions behind us.

“That Ove is so stubborn. People are led astray by feminine charms all the time. Wouldn’t you agree, Lady Floortje?” asked Dmitry.

“How would I know?”

“I suppose you wouldn’t,” he replied with a merry laugh.

The mixed army of soldiers and citizens had made it to the open space before the castle—the very castle where Prince Richie had been held captive before escaping a mere nine days ago. So much had happened in that time. I felt the prince and I had both grown a great deal.

The king came forth on his mount.

“Show yourself, you disgrace of a son! Your father is here! Come out and bow to us!”

The king’s voice resounded through the surroundings. Anyone at the gate was certain to have heard it. Prince Jonas, Jaromíra, and Erhard appeared on top of the gate.

“Father! You’re not...um...not the king anymore!”

“So that’s what you have to say? Here’s our offer: you shut that puny mouth of yours, surrender the castle, and we’ll think about sparing your life, you walking embarrassment!”

“Y-Y-Y-You’re not gonna pull that one on me! I-I’m the king of Aryaka now! S-S-So get out! I said, get out!!!”

The king turned back to his people, a smile on his face.

“You have heard the words of the prince, citizens. And what say you? Would you welcome Jonas as your king? Answer us!”

The citizens fell silent.

“He’s anything but reliable...”

“I’d hate to have a king so easily deceived by women...”

“He’s nothing without Erhard...”

Atop the gate, Prince Jonas looked perturbed.

“Hey, when I become king...if you’ll have me as your king, I’ll halve the taxes! How does that sound?!”

The people fell silent again, before breaking into murmurs.

“He’s trying to bribe us...”

“Is he serious...?”

“A real king wouldn’t stoop so low...”

King Arvi broke out laughing atop his mount.

“Ah ha ha! Money? Our disgrace of a son wants to buy the throne with money! Ah ha ha! It seems the education he has been bestowed with was woefully inadequate. As your monarch, we have caused trouble to all of you,” said the king, lowering his head to his people.

“Whoa, please stop that! It’s not like it’s your fault!”

“Please, Your Majesty, you’re making me uncomfortable!”

Baffled by the king’s behavior, the citizens all implored him to stop.

“Let it be known henceforth that we shall not lower taxes, for a kingdom needs money to protect its people!”

The benefactors of King Arvi’s protection were pleased with those words.

“Yeah! Now that’s how it should be!”

“What good is money if the whole kingdom falls?!”

Raising an arm, the king continued.

“What we shall promise you is pride! Pride from living in this nation, and joy from having been born here! We swear to the goddess to make you feel proud to be Aryakans! Now choose! Shall it be us, or Jonas?!”

The masses shouted all at once.

“Arvi! Arvi! Arvi! You are our king!”

Such a loud and massive demonstration of support seemed to take the strength out of Jonas’s legs as he fell to his knees. It was clear who was the rightful king. *Such charisma!*

As the king left the stage, it seemed my cue to enter it. I stepped forth.

“Prince Jonas, Jaromíra, surrender now and open the gates!”

“Not a chance! Are you stupid? We’re holding this castle!” resounded Jaromíra’s hysterical voice through the open space.

The people started booing.

“The city has submitted to the king’s authority! No backup is coming, Jaromíra! Are you planning to sit there till you rot?!”

“I-If the alternative is losing to the likes of you, I choose death by starvation, you insurgent Floortje Hobbema!!!”

“You are a sham of a saint banished by the goddess, your partner is a sham of a king who hasn’t even been crowned, and you intend to hold the castle, thinking someone will come to your aid? Who?!”

“Shut up! Someone will, all right?! I can’t wait to see your face when that happens!”

What was this idiot hoping for?

“Milady, this is the part where you have the elites destroy the gate, then send in twenty thousand troops to slaughter all the guards. Don’t worry—they may be of the royal guard, but there’s only five thousand of them. It won’t take half

a day to crush them all.”

“Silence, Adekichi.”

“Stop with the ‘Adekichi’ already!”

Why was my ditzy maid having such terrible thoughts? They sullied the “Natori” logo on her back. *Now, what do I do...?*

“We *could* simply surround them and wait for them to rot...”

“Our supplies will last us a week, then we’ll have to buy more from merchants,” spoke Maurilio.

I didn’t want to spend weeks on this. Could I summon a dohyō and call the bunch standing atop the gate? Would it be possible to summon one on the bridge? What would happen to the spectators’ seats? *Hmm...*

“You seem troubled.”

To my surprise, before me stood the elderly referee from house Shikimori.

“I wouldn’t recommend trying anything over water.”

“Oh...”

The elder approached the mounted king.

“Is that your castle over there, Kimura?”

“‘Kimura’...? Oh, you are referring to us. Yes, the castle belongs to us.”

“I see. Might I suggest turning the whole structure into a *kokugikan*—a sumo hall?”

“As in, an arena?”

“That’s right. An arena with thirty thousand spectator seats on two floors above ground, and an underground yakitori factory.”

“A yakitori factory? We aren’t sure why we feel this way, but it has a nice ring to it.”

“Hm... Why not leave the main structures alone and use the garden space instead?” I proposed.

“That is possible, but the castle walls will have to be sacrificed for building

materials.”

Without the walls, the castle’s only defensive installation would be the moat. However, the arena itself could function as a wall.

“What is your decision, King Arvi?”

“Hmm. What will happen to those three half-wits on the gate if we make this ‘sumo hall’?”

“You can force them outside, or inside.”

“Then let’s do it! And put them inside. What is required of us?”

“You, the owner of the castle, and Floortje, a wielder of unparalleled sumo power, must speak the incantation together. The words are, ‘Come forth, Aryakan Sumo Castle.’”

I looked over at the king. He gave me a deep nod.

“Come forth, Aryakan Sumo Castle!”

Our simultaneous incantation was loud and clear. The next moment, the front gate of the castle came crumbling down.

“What the?!”

“Aaaaagh!”

“What?!”

The three people standing on top of the collapsing gate fell right into it. Moments later, a large sumo hall came rising out of the ground, rumbling through the area. The design wasn’t that of the modern Ryōgoku Kokugikan in Japan. It was the fancy design of the original one, scaled up.

“It’s...so big.”

“It has encroached upon the castle.”

“The sumo hall ended up bigger than expected. It appears the contractors went a little overboard, this being the Aryakan Kokugikan and everything.”

The Aryakan Kokugikan finally stopped growing after consuming about half the castle. The new and the old were a good match: you might’ve thought they

had been built that way if you didn't know any better.

Voices came from the translucent Shikimori elder's transceiver.

"This is Construction Team Alpha. 4,756 Temple Knights restrained and sent to second-floor box seats. Over."

"Roger, Construction Team Alpha. Erect a barrier around the box seats so the Temple Knights stay still. Over."

"This is Construction Team Bravo. We've gathered attendants, maids, butlers, and cooks from around the castle, guiding them to second-floor seats. Over."

"Roger, Construction Team Bravo. Be nice to them, you hear?"

"This is Construction Team Charlie. We've freed the prisoners from the dungeon, proceeding to escort them to the eastern second-floor seats. Over."

"Roger, Construction Team Charlie. Anyone feeling sick amongst their numbers? Over."

"This is Construction Team Charlie. No major concerns here. Mind if we give them some water? Over."

"Not at all, go ahead. See to their needs as they arise. Construction Team Echo, come in."

"This is Construction Team Echo. We're busy preparing the box seats. Something wrong? Over."

"Prisoners freed from the dungeon are being escorted to the eastern second-floor seats. They've endured hardships lately, so replace the pine set souvenirs with the more expensive yokozuna sets. Over."

"This is Construction Team Echo, roger that. Can we add three additional wet towels for each seat? Over."

"All right, and throw in three bottles of mineral water too. Over."

The people of Valhalla were ridiculously good at this sort of thing.

"Now, everything is ready. The troops can enter the castle too."

King Arvi turned back to look over the citizens.

“What about our people? Have they no place to observe from?”

A gentle smile appeared on the Shikimori elder’s face.

“Well then, let us add some standing room. Your kindness befits your title, Kimura.”

“We merely wanted to show our people how Lady Floortje gives our wayward son a good drubbing.” The king laughed.

I crossed the bridge, my elite rikishi in tow. The entrance was wide open, with translucent people standing and bowing to each entrant. I heard the sound of drums coming from somewhere... From Adekichi on top of a tower, actually.

It was time. Time for the grand finale, the sumo tournament held here in Aryaka’s Royal Castle!

I passed through the entrance. A translucent sumo wrestler was working as a ticket collector.

“Welcome.”

Upon closer inspection, I realized it was my favorite wrestler from my past life.

“I’m glad I could see you again.”

“It’s an honor. Today is the opening of this hall, so entry is free. Wrestler Floortje, this way please. Fellow members of the stable are welcome too.”

The translucent wrestler led us through the marvelous, brand new building.

“It’s just... Wow. What’s up with that pane of glass? It’s so transparent.”

“Stop looking around, apprentice. I must say, though, it boggles my mind that sumo will be taking place in such a palace.”

“I’ll go help the troops find their way, Coach.”

“Thank you, Maurilio. For everything.”

“Think nothing of it.”

The former general left. Though he was a general no longer, he was still a fine

man concerned about his troops.

“Wow, Floortje. This place is all shiny and modern, far more so than the interior of the castle,” spoke Prince Richie.

“Yes, it’s even better than Ryōgoku Kokugikan.”

There was a museum at the end of the hallway we passed through. Had this been Ryōgoku Kokugikan, there would’ve been a variety of things here, such as championship cups, but at the moment there was nothing yet. We would be filling it from here on out, forging a long history of numerous bouts, with proof of victories to be left in this very place.

As I peeked through an open door, my vision was filled with box seats. Lower down were green cushions placed around the floor, and at their center was the dohyō.

“Wow, what a hall! You’ll be doing sumo over there, right? How come there’s a roof yet there are no pillars? Is it magic?”

“No—it’s suspended by wires from above.”

The fine roof had tassels of different colors hanging from each corner: red, green, black, and white. There was a purple banner hanging from it too.

Descending the stairs of the main hall, I visited the underground. After going through the cloakroom and the passage that followed, I came to what appeared to be the judges’ room. Translucent former rikishi, once famous, were sitting together and having a pleasant conversation. This whole thing was getting closer and closer to the reality I had once known. As Grand Sumo thrived, it could carry over to this world in its entirety. I would be happy about that, of course, but it raised some concerns about the dimensional aspect of such a development. *Oh well.* I decided to let that useless goddess deal with all that and walked on. Next up was the referee room.

“This is your stop, Kimura,” spoke our translucent guide.

“Very well. Do your best in the ring, Floortje.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“See you later, father.”

“Remember, son: apply yourself.”

“Sure!”

That cheerful voice was music to my ears. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

Next up in that passage was the east retiring room—the more prestigious of the two. It was surprisingly spacious.

“Whoa! What is this mat?!” cheerfully shouted Phalaris, leaping to the highest tile of tatami.

“These are made of grass, aren’t they? They smell nice,” uttered Yustin.

“Of soft rush, to be precise.”

“You know your stuff, Coach,” said Lord Clifton as he took off Phalaris’s sandals.

It was surprising to see him gladly look after someone like that.

As for me, there was little to do in this room. I had been wearing a mawashi on top of my dress since entering the capital, so there were no further preparations to make. I wondered if Prince Jonas, Jaromíra, and Erhard were preparing in the west retiring room. And besides, wasn’t their defeat set in stone the moment the castle transformed into a sumo hall? I wasn’t looking forward to thrashing them just as punishment. As I stood thinking about those three, they came striding through the “flower road”—the aisle which connected the retiring rooms to the ring—and entered my room.

“Floortje! H-Here’s our ultimatum!”

“Brother...” said Richie.

“W-We challenge you to a duel! I...I don’t care if it’s in sumo!”

“If that’s how you want this to go...”

What had brought this on?

“A b-best of three! The side that wins two bouts can make the losing side do anything—how about that?!”

“I’m not sure the king would agree to such terms.”

“And who is supposed to be fighting whom, Jonas?”

The king had come through the passage too, looking sharp in his *tate-gyōji*—highest-ranking referee—attire. With him were the translucent Shikimori elder and the late former yokozuna who was the senior judge.

“Th-The first bout is between me and Richie!”

“Your Highness, that doesn’t bode well for...”

“Don’t you think there is too great a difference in your ages, your heights, and your body weights?”

Yustin and Lord Clifton voiced their protests.

“Shut up, shut up, shut up!!! It’s a fight for the right to the throne. You aren’t going to run from this, are you, Richie?”

Prince Richie stood up and stared his brother down.

“As you wish, Brother. I wouldn’t lose in the ring to someone as twisted as you’ve become.”

The dirty smile on Prince Jonas’s face said, *You fell for it*. He had no idea how strong his younger brother had become during his recent journey.

“All right, we can agree on that for the first bout. Don’t tell me next up is Jaromíra?”

“Th-That’s right. If you can do sumo, then so can I!”

“You don’t have memories of doing sumo in a past life, do you?”

“Huh?”

“That useless goddess told us about you. How she ‘made some idiot reincarnate here’ and that spelled trouble for this world?”

“Wh-What?!”

“You must have been a game addict or something in your past life, am I right?”

“Huh? How did you...?”

Looking at me with a puzzled expression, she was clearly slow on the uptake.

“Why didn’t you think I might have been reincarnated too?”

“Wh-What?! Th-That can’t be right—I’m the protagonist of this game!”

“Don’t be stupid. It may be a game world, but we’re all alive here. We’re not data.”

“H-How low of you to show up and get in the way of my happiness!”

“You destroyed it yourself. Don’t blame me.”

With an ultrasonic shriek, Jaromíra stamped her feet in anger. I had never seen anyone do this in real life before.

“How long are you going to talk nonsense? What about the second bout?”

“I wanna go, I wanna go!” volunteered Phalaris.

“Oh—a child! Okay, I’ll fight you!”

“All right, you’re on!”

“How cute. It’s you against me, okay?” said Jaromíra.

The room fell silent for a moment.

“Are you sure you want to fight him?”

“Of course!”

All present members of my stable had looks on their faces that said, *She’s gone and done it now...* Not that I minded, since the two of them seemed happy with this decision. Erhard looked at Phalaris in shock, but didn’t object.

“The last bout will be between Lady Floortje and me,” he said. “Everyone okay with that?”

“Sure. Sounds fitting for a final bout.”

Three bouts, huh? I didn’t want to lose even one of them.

Clap clap clap clap! With the sound of wooden clappers, Adekichi began the announcements.

“On the east, Prince Richie... On the west, Prince Jonas...”

Standing on the dohyō, she pointed her white folding fan at the two wrestlers. I would be observing the bout from the ringside seats together with the translucent wrestler from earlier, as well as the rest of my stable. Opposite from us sat Jaromíra and Erhard, wearing their usual outfits.

The two princes climbed the dohyō. Prince Richie was clad in his red mawashi, looking sharp. He was also barefoot and unarmed, of course. And as for Prince Jonas... He had climbed the dohyō in his boots. Then again, he was a character in an otome game where main characters didn't seem to be able to change their outfits. The problem was *what* he was wearing. Namely, horse-riding clothes with a coat that completely covered his belt. To top it off, he held a wooden sword in his right hand.

"Prince Jonas! What is that in your hand?!"

"Heh heh. Weapons are allowed, aren't they, Lord Clifton?"

"Well, I guess, but do you plan to hit your brother with that?"

"I can't afford to lose! At this point, I'll do whatever it takes. If he has a problem with that, he can withdraw from the fight and give me the victory!"

Prince Richie was silently throwing salt on the ring.

"I don't mind, Clifton. Let him use that sword if he wants."

"B-But Your Highness!"

"I don't mind. I'll accept any challenger. It's how I've been taught at Floortje's stable."

With that, he performed shiko. *I'm proud of you, Your Highness.* He was even skilled enough to deal with Phalaris now, so I wasn't worried.

The referee was not the king, but rather one of the translucent ones. Neither prince had his name on the table of rankings, so the referee, too, was of the lowest rank.

"Face each other."

The princes stared each other down in the ring. Prince Richie kept to the ground while the other prince stood up straight, wielding his wooden sword in one hand.

“Jonas—your weapon will be tolerated, but you must touch the line in the ground on your side of the ring with your fist, or the bout will not start,” spoke the referee.

“You really make a big deal out of this children’s game, huh...? Fine.”

“It is time,” announced the referee.

After synchronizing their breathing and touching the ground with their fists, the two princes rose at the same time.

“Hakkeyoi! Still in!”

Prince Richie charged at his opponent like a bullet, getting up close and personal.

“Huh, what?!”

A loud crash echoed through the hall. Prince Jonas had missed his chance to use the sword, opening his eyes wide in surprise. Prince Richie, on the other hand, held a firm grip on his brother’s coat, pushing him farther and farther.

“Gah, I-let me go, Richie!”

“Come to your senses, Brother!”

Prince Jonas kept being pushed with no way of stopping it due to his high center of mass. The most he could do was hit Prince Richie on the back with his sword, but it had little effect since he could only use his wrist for the swings.

“I always admired you...respected you! You were my pride, a kind brother who was good at studying! So why?! Why?!”

Prince Jonas’s face changed.

“I loved you too, you know! You were my cute little brother! I was fine being just an advisor if it meant you could take the throne!”

“So why?! What made you do all this?! Did you fall for Jaromíra’s tricks?!”

“No! It’s not—it’s not her fault! I mean it...”

Prince Jonas was getting pushed close to the edge of the ring.

“It’s not her fault. I envied you—I was jealous of your bright and cheerful

smile! Of you having everything come your way just because you have a different mother, of you learning how to govern without breaking a sweat while I had to work so hard for it! I was so jealous!”

“Brother! Why, oh why did you not tell me, Brother?! I never wanted the throne if it meant the two of us weren’t both leading happy lives!”

Tears appeared in Prince Jonas’s eyes. The same was true for Prince Richie. Why did such good brothers have to be torn apart? Why...?

“I couldn’t tell you, I *couldn’t*! As royalty, I wasn’t allowed to have such thoughts! And so I resented you all the more, and I hated myself for it!”

“That’s so stupid! You are so, so stupid!”

Prince Jonas’s leg came up against one of the four bales which were set slightly back from the edge of the ring. For a brief moment, Prince Richie relaxed his grip on his opponent’s coat. Prince Jonas threw away his sword and lowered his stance, starting to push his brother back.

“In the midst of my suffering, I met *her*. She told me I could be the way I was...the way I wanted to be! That being ugly and dishonorable was my true nature!”

“And you didn’t think it was just her spouting nonsense?!”

Prince Jonas took his brother’s mawashi in an *uwate*—an overarm grip—and pushed him farther.

“I thought I could finally fulfill my ambitions...but you were in the way. So to be myself, to lead my own life, I resolved to sacrifice my beloved brother and take the throne!”

“That resolve isn’t real! Come to your senses!”

“It’s all for the throne! For my and Jaromíra’s lives! I’ve done nothing wrong!”

Prince Richie raised his face to look at his brother with indignation.

“But you have, Brother! You have!!!”

Slap!—came Prince Richie’s harite.

“What value is there in life built upon another’s sacrifice?! Are you happy

after sacrificing Floortje, an innocent?! Are you happy after sacrificing me?! Open your eyes already, Brother!”

Slap slap slap slap! A series of harite assaulted Prince Jonas’s chest and cheeks, and the rest of his face.

“Gah! You think you know anything about me?!” Jonas cried.

“I don’t! Why would I want to understand how someone can be happy through dastardly means?!”

I couldn’t resist rising from my seat.

“Put your back into it, Prince Richie!”

And then I saw it. The spirit of sumo, shining inside his chest. It was still small, but undeniably there.

“I will reprimand you for your actions! Through sumo I will punish your cowardice, your ignorance, your crookedness! And then I’ll bring back my kind, cheerful brother!”

“Agggghh!”

Shoving his hands under his crying brother’s armpits, Prince Richie sent him flying with a beltless arm throw. A gust of wind blew as Prince Jonas came crashing into the ground. *Slam!*

What a splendid beltless arm throw, Your Highness! And your ever-vigilant, dignified stance! Dosukoi dosukoi!

Prince Jonas lay on the ground, crying.

“I...lost...”

“You have, Brother.”

“When did you...get so strong...?” He covered his face with his hand.

“It’s all thanks to Floortje.”

“I’m sorry, Richie...”

Prince Jonas broke down crying.

“Prince Richie!!!”

As the war fan was raised to the east, the audience exploded with cheers. The first bout was over.

When Prince Richie climbed down the dohyō, I wiped his tears with my handkerchief.

“You were magnificent, Your Highness.”

“Do you think I managed to reach him?”

“I’m sure you did. See over there how downcast he looks?”

Among the ringside seats on the opposite side of the dohyō, Jaromíra was consoling the defeated prince. Hopefully, he would be back to his former self after this.

Dmitry and Adekichi climbed the dohyō next and proceeded to even out the ground with brooms. *Clap clap clap clap!* The wooden clappers struck again.

“All right—it’s my turn!”

“Show her what you’re made of, Phalaris.”

“Course! I got this, Floortje!”

He stood up. Adekichi spread her white fan.

“On the east, Phalaris, Phalaris... On the west, Jaromíra, Jaromíra...”

Phalaris climbed the dohyō, as did Jaromíra.

“Hey, why’s she got no mawashi?”

“I’d never wear such a thing!”

“And she has a rod.”

“Weapons are allowed, aren’t they?!”

Of all things, Jaromíra was carrying a magic wand. Seeing it, the translucent referee grimaced. This one had a slightly higher rank.

“I don’t think we can allow projectile weapons...”

“How do you imagine a magic user without a magic wand?! Let me use this!”

The translucent head judge and the translucent referee began to confer. Phalaris tried to find something to do in the meantime, such as perform shiko and clean his mouth with *chikara mizu*—purified water given to wrestlers before a bout, which was not to be drunk.

“What are your thoughts on this, Wrestler Phalaris?”

“Hmm... I don’t really care. It’s not gonna work on me anyway.”

“Very well. We shall permit it this once.”

“Heh heh, of course!”

Jaromíra swung her wand around, a twisted smile on her face. What kind of magic did it contain? Flame? Ice? I couldn’t tell.

“C’mon, let’s go already!”

“Heh heh. I’m sorry, kid, but I’ll be taking this win.”

“Face each other.”

Phalaris had only trained for two days, but his sumo was looking good. Jaromíra stood in a top-heavy stance with her wand in hand. The two stared each other down.

“Face each other,” the referee repeated.

Their fists touched the lines in the ground almost in sync.

“Hakkeyoi!”

“Take this! Thunderstorm!”

As Jaromíra pointed her wand at Phalaris, a lightning bolt shot out with a thunderous sound, arcing towards her opponent. To think that wand was imbued with medium-level magic used in the army! *Watch out, Phalaris!* But my worries quickly proved unfounded, as the bolt had no effect on its target.

Phalaris looked at the lightning bolt zapping around him with a quizzical expression.

“Wh-Why aren’t you dead?! That was ten thousand volts! What’s wrong with you?!”

“What is this, anyway?”

“Lightning magic! It’s the ultimate ace in the hole! There aren’t a lot of wands out there that can shoot military-grade spells!”

“It tickles.”

He made a gesture of catching a louse. When he opened his palm, there was a handful of lightning twisting inside, releasing sparks around itself. He then squeezed his hand, and the lightning vanished.

“Wh-What?! Who...who are you? Y-You’re no ordinary human.”

“That’s right.”

“So what are you?! You sneaky little...”

“A dragon. So?”

“Ahhhhh!!!”

Jaromíra’s scream pierced through the hall. I couldn’t think of a situation to which the expression “you reap what you sow” would apply more. Phalaris took a step forward.

“Hey. You’re weak, aren’t you?”

“S-Stay back! Stay back!”

“Like, *really* weak.”

“Ahhh! You played me again, Floortje! Y-You set it all up so I would ask to fight this monster!” shouted Jaromíra, turning my way.

All members of my stable waved away her allegations. Jaromíra had already given up the fight and was about to step outside the ring, but Phalaris wouldn’t let her. He instantly closed the distance between them, pushed, and thrust. With his palm striking her stomach, Jaromíra’s heavily distorted face was surely an accurate representation of how it must have felt. She went spinning out of the ring and across the “flower road,” hit a wall, bounced off, hit another wall several times, and then finally crashed into the floor. It was just like those terrible car accidents you see in movies. Was Jaromíra even alive? *Oh, she is—saw her twitch just now.* She was tough, all right.

“Phalaris!”

The referee raised his war fan to the east.

“Well, that was pretty boring. I’d rather be fighting you or Richie.”

“Let’s practice tomorrow morning, okay?”

“Okay, sure.”

Phalaris smiled. Prince Richie came with a towel to wipe the sweat off Phalaris’s face. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

As yobidashi came up the dohyō to sweep it clean, my eyes met those of Erhard on the other side. He had a faint smile on his face. Two of the bouts in this best of three had already ended in victory for our side, and there was no point in fighting him. I could simply have the opposing side convicted and call it a day. But I wouldn’t be satisfied with such a conclusion. The sumo spirit inside me whispered: “Bring down Aryaka’s west yokozuna, Erhard.” The final bout was drawing closer by the minute.

“On the east, Floortje, Floortje... On the west, Erhard, Erhard...”

Summoned by Adekichi, I went up the dohyō, and so did Erhard. He was clad in armor, wearing two daggers at his waist. On his face was a nasty sneer.

“You don’t mind weapons, do you?”

“No, feel free.”

I scooped up a handful of salt and threw it on the ring.

“I chose to take part in this third bout to ensure you don’t leave this ring alive.”

“Oh, really?”

“This entire kingdom rests on your shoulders, Floortje. All I have to do is kill you, and it will be child’s play to bring ruin upon this land.”

“Uh-huh.”

I performed shiko.

“There’s nothing martial arts can do against daggers. No amount of debuffs on me will save you.”

I spread my hands and performed shiko again, not indulging Erhard with a reply. He clicked his tongue.

“Aren’t you scared of death?!”

“If that’s how the bout is to end, no.”

“Impossible! Stop acting tough! There’s no one who isn’t scared of death!”

What was he so upset about?

“You know it’s the end once you’re dead, right? Whatever happiness you imagine for your future—it’s over there and then!”

“Even if I die, someone will continue my legacy.”

“So what? You’d be dead, and your happiness gone. There’s nobody who would accept that and simply pray for the happiness of another. You’re a liar.”

“Aren’t you talking about yourself? You act like you’re chasing only your own happiness, but everything you’re doing is so you can get your father’s approval.”

Erhard caught his breath and took a step back.

“What are you talking about? M-My father is dead.”

“Your real father. The Demon Lord.”

He stared at me with wide-open eyes. I supposed he was technically chasing happiness by seeking the approval of someone else, but it still differed slightly from Jaromíra’s pursuit of nothing but her own happiness. The theme of Erhard’s route in the game was “arrogance.” The child of a human and the Demon Lord, he was skilled in everything. Whether it was studies or warfare, he demonstrated excellent results. He looked down on others as they couldn’t do what came so easily to him. That is what made him so conceited. He grew to harbor contempt for the kingdom and sought to ruin it in service to his father.

In the game, it was Saint Jaromíra who managed to change him. She introduced something he couldn’t handle into his value system: love. Erhard

lost to love. Having his soul subdued by Jaromíra's selfless actions, he gave in and swore eternal love to her. I couldn't subdue him with the power of love, so instead I would use regular power. An overwhelming power that would break him on the inside! For that was my way of doing things.

"You know a lot about me, don't you? You must've been reincarnated here."

"That's right. Apparently so I could clean up after a certain idiot. But this is probably still the real me."

"Playing some children's game only to get killed because you're unarmed—*that's* the real you?!"

"Yes. I take pride in fighting you in sumo, barehanded."

I pointed at my opponent.

"This time I won't even use the magical effects of certain sumo abilities. Pure sumo is enough to beat weaklings like you."

"What...?" Erhard made a wry face. "And what is it that makes you call me a weakling?! Answer me, Floortje!"

I gave a half smile.

"You come wearing armor and two daggers against a barehanded woman. If that is not cowardice, I don't know what is. You're afraid because you realize you can't win otherwise."

"You little..."

As anger began to surface on Erhard's face, I continued to deride him with a smile on mine.

"Your father would shower you with praise. The Demon Lord no doubt enjoys such dastardly behavior. He would surely be proud of his son coming to cut down an unarmed girl."

"S-Screw you! Father... My father may be of ill repute, but he's a proud man! He wouldn't approve...of..."

Erhard realized: even if he killed me here and presented this kingdom to his father, he couldn't stand with pride before him.

“You are full of lies, always concerned with keeping up appearances. A childish coward who can’t even show his naked body.”

“Silence. All I have to do is win. Everything will be lost if I am defeated...”

“Are you scared of losing? Scared of ostracism should everyone find out about your demonic blood?”

“I...I...”

I raised my voice.

“You are the same as Jaromíra—thinking only of yourself, always lying and using contemptible means to achieve your selfish ends! How would I lose to a man as ignoble as you?!”

Erhard’s anguish was apparent from his cold sweat and his ragged breathing.

“I’m...not the same as her... I have pride...”

“Then take off that armor.”

“But...”

“Are you scared of everyone finding out about your demonic roots? Are you saying the love between your mother and the Demon Lord was a mistake?!”

“It was no mistake! Neither on my mother’s part, nor on that of my father! My foster father would always hit my mother and curse at her for her adultery, but she still loved me!”

“Why don’t you sort that out on your own? It’s none of my concern. And the bout is about to start.”

Erhard gave a long sigh.

“Very well—I was mistaken. I apologize. Pride is important. And I was about to taint our fight with all this.”

With that, Erhard cast down his daggers and took off all of his armor, which left him stark naked. His was a splendid, well-proportioned body. But there were deep-blue scales on his left arm, from his shoulder down to around the wrist. His legs were covered in scales too, with sharp talons growing from his feet.

Silence descended over the crowd.

I recalled there being an in-game scene where Erhard confessed his demonic roots to Jaromíra, and in that scene he appeared fully naked—the only one in the game to do so. That explained why he could undress in a formal setting, unlike the rest of us.

“He’s a demon—a *demon*! The captain of the royal guard was a demon all along!!!”

“What a liar! He was the one who made Prince Jonas stray from the right path!”

“A demon! A foul demon!!!”

Jeering came from the audience. Beer cans and frozen tangerines from souvenir sets came flying onto the dohyō.

“You idiots!!! What do you think you’re doing in a place of sacred bouts?!”

King Arvi’s voice thundered through the hall, quelling the turmoil. Adekichi came to get those cans and tangerines out of the ring. A black mawashi came slowly down from above, landing in Erhard’s hands.

“Yustin, Clifton, help him put it on.”

“You got it.”

“Right away, Coach!”

They put it on Erhard without another word. In the meantime, several yobidashi circled around the ring with sponsor banners. The number of said banners had greatly increased over the last tournaments: by now there were at least fifty.

“Now, let us do sumo.”

“Right. Everything...feels so much clearer now.”

“Do your best, Erhard.”

“Coach is strong, so think of it as practice, all right?”

Erhard stared in disbelief at Yustin and Clifton, taken aback by their encouragement.

“We’re enemies, you know.”

“That’s not how it works in sumo.”

“As you’ll quickly realize.”

After the two left the dohyō, laughing, the king took position at its center. This bout would be overseen by the highest-ranking referee.

“After this long series of bouts, wrestler Floortje and wrestler Erhard shall engage in one final bout to conclude the tournament.” The king managed to pull off the referee voice quite well.

Erhard and I faced each other, building the pressure with our glares. Our breathing failed to synchronize. I stepped away, threw salt on the ring, then did some bending and stretching. We resumed staring each other down.

“Face each other.”

Our breathing synchronized. We touched the ground with our fists.

“Hakkeyoi!”

So began Aryaka’s final bout.

Erhard and I crashed into each other. His center of mass was high, so I managed to push him.

“Kgh! So you were...this strong?!”

I pushed, and pushed, and pushed again. With his mawashi firmly in my deep underarm grip, I steadily shoved him to the edge of the ring.

“Ngh!”

Left with no other option, my opponent lowered his stance. It was my chance to trip him and I didn’t miss it.

“Right on, Coach!”

“He’s done for!”

Alas, Erhard held the top rank in Aryaka’s table of rankings for a reason. He easily deflected my attempt to trip him and halted my advance. *Such strength*

of the hips!

“I have to admit, I underestimated this. Thought it was just a stupid game...”

As befitted the captain of the royal guard, he was well versed in martial arts, with dexterity to match. His movements reminded me of Yustin.

Erhard gripped my mawashi from above my arms. His muscular strength was highly impressive. With that, we ended up locked in place.

“I’ll be learning as I go.”

“Be my guest.”

I charged up my sumo spirit, pouring strength into my arms and using it to push my opponent. But he had saved up enough of his own strength to stop my advance. To use his extra might against him, I pulled away and attempted to redirect him, forcing him off-balance.

“Pushing and pulling, is it?!”

With quick reflexes, he instantly repelled my attack, lowered his hips, and began to build strength. And when you don’t pull, you push. He had to scramble to react to my renewed advance.

“Ggh! Ngh!”

Erhard had the presence of mind to engage in this dance of pushing and pulling and remain where he stood. I had expected no less.

“Still in, still in!”

The king was already an expert referee—and after such a short time too.

Erhard pushed; I countered by pulling. As he tried to trip me up with a skillful technique borrowed from a different martial art, I evaded it and tripped his inner leg to throw him off-balance. Within that same moment, Erhard pulled on my mawashi to interrupt my move. We were firmly locked in place again. *Not bad.*

“This is...haah, haah...far more complex than I thought...”

“You still have a lot to learn, novice rikishi.”

I broke our stalemate by shifting my arms to the right, and went for an

overarm throw. My opponent did lose his balance for a moment, but he used a bale at the edge of the ring to stand his ground.

“Still in, still in!”

The resilience of his hips and the flexibility of his lower half were things of wonder. Had I been fighting Yustin, that move would’ve sent my opponent flying.

Erhard lowered his center of mass and twisted his hips to plant his feet firmly in the ground again. He was a formidable foe, learning incredibly quickly.

“Haah, haah... This is...really...”

But speaking during a bout was his weakness. I pressed my head against his chest, held onto his arm gripping my mawashi, and used my whole body to twist it in what is known as *zubuneri*—a head pivot throw! My opponent must have realized the impending danger, because he put strength into the arm in my hold and halted my attempts at twisting it. *Such Herculean might!* Establishing the direction of the twist, he thrust out his leg. *Excellent judgment too.* I gave up on the twisting and put some distance between us. He really was this kingdom’s yokozuna for a reason.

“Still in, still in!”

Erhard extended his hand, attempting to reinitiate our grapple. Deflecting it with my own hand, I shuffled my feet to the side, approached him, and gripped his mawashi. He responded in kind: we were in a standstill once again.

“I used to like dancing with girls at dance parties, you know. It was exciting.”

What was this frivolous fellow talking about in the middle of a fight?

“Grappling with you now brings back those memories, because it’s just as exciting as that used to be!”

“Oh, please.”

Sumo isn’t a dance. It’s far, far better! *Dosukoi dosukoi!!!*

Erhard had a smile on his face. Not the dark kind he’d worn before entering the ring: rather, it was the delightful smile of someone who had put all doubts behind them. *Good, good.* Sumo is a martial art that makes everyone smile. A

ritual where two people fight with nothing but their near-naked bodies, their honed skills, their grown muscles, and their trained spirit. Those who have grasped the spirit of sumo get a buff in the ring.

Erhard was getting stronger, his moves faster and more refined. He was a truly worthy opponent: just the way I liked it. Worries, schemes, ulterior motives—they all vanish in the ring. Just two people laid bare clashing, sweating, and using all the strength they can muster for the bout. That’s what sumo is all about.

“Here I go, Floortje!”

“Come, Erhard!”

We traded blows in the ring. My opponent used modified techniques from other martial arts while I stuck with my well-practiced traditional sumo moves.

“Floortje! Floortje!”

“E-Erhard! Y-You can do it!”

I heard cheering from the audience. Most of it was directed at me at first, but gradually support for Erhard grew too. Everyone was at the edge of their seats as they watched this epic bout unfold.

“This is such a thrill! This martial art is one of a kind!”

“Sumo brings smiles to everyone’s faces!”

“Ah, how much of my life has gone to waste! I wish I had learned of this art sooner!”

“It’s never too late in life! You can start walking on the path of sumo from now on!”

“Ah, so that’s how it is... That’s the way of sumo, then.” Sumo had evidently lodged itself deep in Erhard’s soul. “Should I use all of my strength here, Floortje...?”

“There’s no use holding back in sumo! Come at me with all you’ve got! I don’t care if it’s demonic strength or the blood of the Demon Lord, I’ll fight it all!”

Erhard shed a tear, a smile on his face.

“You are...one hell of a woman, Floortje. Very well—then use it I shall.”

His body grew in size, covering itself in scales throughout. Horns grew out of his forehead and sharp claws appeared on his hands. Before me now stood a muscular demon twice the size of the man I had been fighting up to this point. And though he may not have looked human, his figure was beautiful in its proportions.

“Come! I don’t care if you’re a demon, I’ll take you down without any magical effects! You’re about to find out there’s always someone better than you!”

“Here I go, Floortje!!!”

Demonic Erhard came charging at me, and I responded in kind. We collided square in the center of the ring.

“Still in, still in!” The king’s strained voice echoed through the hall.

A collision with that massive figure was like being in a car crash. I couldn’t handle the pressure, my high heels beginning to slide back. The charge of Erhard’s demonic version was amazing. He was even stronger than Phalaris, and his technique was far superior to what that dragon possessed.

Revving up my sumo spirit, I tried to stop Erhard’s advance. But it wasn’t enough: I was still sliding back. I gripped his mawashi, he gripped mine. We were locked up again. He was strong. No human could ever come close to this level of might. It was practically an infinite well of muscle strength, and his body weight was nothing to scoff at either. I was at an overwhelming disadvantage. And that’s why I began to smile. *Of course. Of course! I wouldn’t have sumo any other way!*

With a radiant smile on my face, I struggled to stop Erhard’s charge. *Schunk!* His claws had sliced my flesh around my mawashi. Acute pain surged through me. *I don’t care. I don’t care. Grow all the claws and spines you want, I’ll still bring you down with sumo. Not a problem.*

However, I was still getting pushed back. My opponent’s strength was out of this world. I attempted to twist his charge and throw him off-balance, to trip him and make him fall. But his center of mass was low—the ideal way of carrying oneself in sumo. His reactions had grown considerably faster too.

Demons and humans had little in common as species. Demons lived long and were very strong on their own. However, they weren't very fertile, and it was difficult for them to grow in numbers. All in all, they were formidable enemies of humanity. But I couldn't care less.

Erhard pushed onward with the destructive force of a speeding train. I had to stop it, had to find some way. And yet... My high heels cared not for my troubles, continuing to slide backwards. Suddenly, a startling sensation on my heels—it was one of the four bales set slightly back. I was at the very edge of the ring.

“This is the end, Floortje.”

“It's not over yet!”

“Still in, still in!!!”

Demonic Erhard was relying on textbook pushing sumo. He must've judged it to be the most effective strategy given his form and weight. The force of his pushing felt like it could break my back. I pumped some more juice into my sumo spirit to counter his advance. Faced with such overwhelming strength, I knew I was in deep trouble. My muscles were crying out in pain. My breathing had grown rough. If I let my sumo spirit relax for a second, I would be pushed out in an instant.

Was this it? Was I to be stopped by the limits of the human body? No. This wasn't the sumo I believed in. Sumo was far, far more amazing than this. Perhaps I hadn't trained enough. This otome game world ensured I couldn't put on any weight or muscle. That was a major disadvantage for me, especially given my small size. Grappling with a demon was like a little girl grappling with a giant of a man. Still... I hadn't lost yet. I hadn't lost yet!

“Hang in there, Floortje!!!” came my beloved prince's support.

“Don't even think of losing, Coach!”

“Coach! If there's anyone who can do this, it's you!”

Next were Yustin's and Lord Clifton's voices.

“Coach!!!”

“Put your back into it, Floortje!”

I heard the former general Maurilio and Phalaris cheering for me.

“Floortje! Floortje! Floortje!”

My elite rikishi unit, the soldiers in this hall, knights, maids, and servants—they were all cheering for me. *How could I forget?* What makes people strong is the bonds between them: friendship, respect, love. *That* is the source of human strength. I could feel Prince Richie’s little spirit of sumo. I could feel it in Yustin, in Lord Clifton, in Maurilio, in Phalaris. I felt it faintly in the elite rikishi, in troops, in knights, in maids, in servants. And when everyone’s sumo spirit came together...that’s when mine began to radiate golden light, operating on a new level.

“Oooooohhhh!!!”

“Gnnh!”

“Watch, Erhard! This is the human spirit of sumo!”

I put my sumo spirit in overdrive. Limitless strength flowed into my arms, my hips, my legs.

“She’s...”

“You’re glowing, Coach!”

“It’s the divine skill of sumo!”

I pushed, and pushed, and pushed, and pushed some more. Erhard struggled to stop me, but it was no longer within the realm of his ability. I pushed him to the center of the ring. My power felt limitless.

“Nggh! The holy light! It’s...burning off my demonic parts!”

“You look more handsome that way, Erhard!”

“You managed to undo my transformation?! Sumo truly works miracles!”

“And that is the power of sumo!”

I recalled the words of my childhood friend Micchan.

“You’d be totally unstoppable if you could use that.”

Tightly gripping my opponent's mawashi, I pulled it hard as if trying to crush it with my body. Erhard opened his eyes wide as my knee entered the space between his thighs at the speed of lightning. I wouldn't trigger a magical effect, however. Instead, I converted the sumo power that would be used for such an effect into additional speed and effectiveness for the move itself. Lightning symbolizes the speed of movement, and it was Micchan from my past life who had dreamed of this perfect skill. I pulled Erhard onto my knee.

"Damn it—what are you trying to do?!"

I channeled the strength from my hips into my upper body and shook my opponent with the speed of lightning.

"Improved Lightning Inner-Thigh Throw!!!"

As I smashed Erhard into the ground with the speed of lightning, he bounced once before rolling off the dohyō. For a moment, silence enveloped the hall.

"Floortje!" King Arvi raised his war fan to the east.

The audience exploded in applause, sending countless cushions into the air. Standing in this rain of cushions, I was declared the winner. I had bested Aryaka's yokozuna, and for a while, I stood relishing my victory, showered in applause from every corner of the hall.



“Before the award ceremony, we shall face the dohyō and sing the national anthem. Everyone, please rise.”

The whole hall stood up, faced the dohyō, and began to sing after the solemn prelude of the anthem finished playing.

“Born at dawn on the continental plains, we run and fight for our fatherland... ♪”

“Though the blood of our comrades may be spilt at the border fort, or they may fall in battle... ♪”

“We shall keep invaders at bay and guard the glory of our nation... ♪”

“Ah, the fertile land of Aryaka, our fatherland... ♪”

Everybody sang in unison, not moving a muscle, their voices clear and sonorous. Even Prince Jonas and Erhard were singing—only Jaromíra was sulking and looking away. Yobidashi brought the championship cup onto the ring and installed it on a table covered with a dark-blue tablecloth.

Adekichi called me back to the dohyō. It seemed the awards would be handed out by the same former yokozuna.

“Floortje Hobbema! You are awarded with this certificate attesting to your splendid performance in the tournament at Aryaka’s royal castle on the 10th of July.”

I bowed and accepted it. Somehow this felt particularly special. Perhaps because, chronologically, all the trouble since that graduation dance party had lasted exactly the length of a regular sumo tournament. The events of today felt like an appropriate grand finale.

“You’ve done well.”

The former yokozuna spoke in a gentle voice, making tears well up in my eyes for a moment. *Thank you, sir.* I accepted the large championship trophy and handed it to Yustin. A multitude of prizes came next, one after another. For example, a year’s worth of rice: thirty bales. *Wow.* I’d be able to feed everyone for a while with this.

Then came a cup of Coca-Cola, one of the new prizes. And a year's worth of the actual drink on top of that. *Hooray!* Then a cow, then a year's worth of alcohol, of vegetables, of soy sauce, of miso, and many more cups and extras. I wondered if the opulence of the prizes had something to do with the fact that this hall now existed.

Listening to the applause reverberating through the building, I thought to myself, *This is finally over.* As I looked up, the light seeping in from behind the suspended roof stung my eyes.

Clap clap clap clap! came the sound of wooden clappers. We weren't going to end this with drums? Then again, they don't play drums at the end of a tournament on the final day. The king and Prince Richie stood on top of the dohyō.

"Now then, although you've all just seen some terrific sumo, we shall now borrow this place to decide the fate of several criminals," solemnly proclaimed the king. "Our embarrassment of a son Jonas plotted a coup on the day of the magic school's graduation ceremony. He commanded the Temple Knight order to detain us, the king of Aryaka, and confine us to Fort Varian."

Prince Jonas, Jaromíra, and Erhard were kneeling in front of the dohyō.

"Additionally, he confined and intended to execute Prince Richie, while planning to lay the blame for this on Lady Floortje. Truly, the most sordid, despicable scheme. Any objections, Jonas?"

"No, father," said Jonas, agony written on his face.

The king nodded.

"As for Erhard, you manipulated this scheme from the shadows with intent to seize the kingdom and present it to your father, the Demon Lord. Any objections?"

"No, Your Majesty," replied Erhard in a calm voice.

Jaromíra was looking around restlessly.

"The kingdom's law stipulates that subversion of the state is a felony,

punishable by death regardless of whether it is successful.”

Prince Jonas and Jaromíra let their panic slip out in their cries. But you didn’t need to hear them to know they were seized with fear.

“However, Prince Richie, the heir apparent, has a different perspective. While it will be some time yet before he takes the throne, we cannot ignore his thoughts on the matter. Richie, it is up to you to decide their fate.”

“Thank you, father. I won’t let you down.”

Prince Richie stood in front of the three accused. Clad in a yellow mawashi and a fur mantle, with the crown of a prince on his head, he looked dignified and wonderful. How precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

“As the crown prince, I shall now pass judgment on these rebels!”

Prince Jonas and Jaromíra twitched while Erhard remained still, unsurprisingly.

“Prince Jonas shall be stripped of his royal status, and together with Jaromíra he shall be banished for ten years to the reclaimed lands in the north!”

The sentenced prince opened his eyes wide in surprise.

“Richie... You’re not going to...execute me?”

“I cannot take your life, Brother. Atone for your sins in the reclaimed lands and then come back.”

“Richie... I...I...”

Prince Jonas began to cry.

“No!!! I don’t want to be some poor farmer!”

“Guards, silence her.”

On the king’s orders, one of them struck Jaromíra with a rod and another put a gag in her mouth. *Ouch.*

“Erhard, you shall lose your position as captain of the royal guard and be banished for ten years to the reclaimed lands in the east!”

The former captain lowered his head.

“If I may, Your Highness...I humbly request you grant me death.”

“I cannot grant that, Erhard, because then I would have to execute my brother too. Spend ten laborious years in the east.”

Erhard prostrated himself.

“As Your Highness desires.”

“Erhard.” I called out to him, and he raised his head in response to my voice. “Before your banishment, come observe the training in my stable.”

“Why?”

“So you can forge your own style of sumo there, in the reclaimed lands. You want to fight me again, do you not?”

“I...I do...want to learn sumo...but...can I...?”

“You are welcome to.”

Tears spilled from Erhard’s eyes.

“I...I promise to challenge you again...one day...”

“I’ll be waiting, Erhard.”

Train your mind. You have what it takes to be a strong rikishi one day.

Erhard cried. Bawled his eyes out like a child.

And thus, the tournament in Aryaka was over. Injustice was defeated, evil got its just deserts, and we stepped forth into tomorrow.

Epilogue: The Final Jinku Disappears into the Sky of the Royal Capital

Historians of the future would call this period “The Age of Grand Sumo.” The Aryakan Sumo Hall became a symbol of the kingdom, hosting tournaments three times a year to the utter delight of the populace.

The Floortje stable, once teaching ten thousand students, broke up into several new ones: the new Floortje stable, with Prince Richie and Phalaris; Yustin’s stable, with many competent wrestlers; Clifton’s stable, with many handsome albeit not very strong wrestlers; and Maurilio’s stable, full of particularly disciplined wrestlers. The rikishi from different stables competed with each other in tournaments.

The citizens of the royal capital were so wildly enthusiastic about the bouts of mighty rikishi that a wave of sumo popularity swept through the kingdom. Children would dream of being sumo wrestlers for years to come. But even during such a golden age, somebody out there was miserable.

Let us look to the reclaimed lands in the north...

“Ugh, I hate this! Why do I have to work the fields every day?! Or is this one of those exile stories? *I’m a Saint Banished on False Charges Who Became the Best at the Slow Life in the Countryside*? That type of story is golden!”

While her blonde hair had completely lost its luster and her hands were covered in blisters, the one thing about her that remained unchanged was the nonsensical stuff she said.

“Stop daydreaming and move your hands, Jaromíra. There’s plenty of soybeans that still need sorting.”

“Aren’t you frustrated, Jonas?! While we’re working our rears off on this farm, Floortje and her friends are enjoying sumo in the lavish halls of the castle!”

Now a commoner, Jonas reacted with an unexpectedly peaceful smile.

“Somehow, no, I don’t mind. So what if someone is living in luxury there, in the capital? You know, Jaromíra, I’m surprisingly fond of the life I’m leading now. It’s tough, sure, but somehow I feel so alive, and I even have my beloved by my side.”

Jaromíra grew red in the face.

“Do you have to be so dull? Please!”

Despite the verbal abuse, Jonas looked at her with a smile. Naturally, his soybean-sorting hands kept moving all the while.

“I... I won’t give up so easily! One day I’ll return to the capital and make them all pay!!!”

“I’m sure you will.”

Though the two exiles had a lot to say about the situation, surprisingly, they might just have been happy.

Next, let us look to the reclaimed lands in the east. The soil was a little better here than in the north, and the land was slightly more developed. At sunset, a man was silently practicing teppo on a pole. He didn’t bother to wipe the sweat on his powerful muscles, nor did he hide the scales that proved his demonic lineage.

It was Erhard. He silently practiced sumo after working the farm at noon. Thanks to that, nobody in this region could beat him in sumo. The local villagers offered to donate money to him, hoping to help him take part in Grand Sumo at the capital one day. But he refused, saying a criminal like him couldn’t take their money, and with added feelings of gratitude, he continued practicing teppo.

“Your Highness.” In the twilight, the eyes of a mysterious creature rose from a nearby pond.

“What is it, Davun?”

“My condolences on your recent failure to ruin Aryaka. The Demon Lord is summoning you to his army. Why not stop all this pretense at the life of a

farmer and return?”

As Erhard continued to strike the pole, a faint smile surfaced on his face.

“The world is a large place, Davun. And humans are strong. I was but an ignorant child.”

“You don’t give yourself enough credit, Your Highness. Your strength rivals that of your father’s toughest warriors. Nobody will dare oppose you even if you succeed him.”

“I want to do sumo, Davun.”

“Is that because you want to get back at that wrestler girl?”

“No. Well, maybe yes... I want to surpass her. Maybe it is to become free.”

“Your Highness...”

Erhard leaned against the pole, pressing his cheek to it.

“I don’t know. It feels like the thing I seek lies beyond mastery in sumo. Which is why I cannot return to father.”

“If that is your choice...” uttered Davun, his voice falling.

“Besides, I must repay the locals for their kindness, as well as my former subordinates from the royal guard who didn’t want to part with me and so came all the way here. I will spend ten years in these lands, paying for my crimes.”

“The Demon Lord will not be pleased,” said Davun after a pause.

“I don’t think I’ll go back to him even after ten years. I will probably go on a journey to see the world and find out just how large it is. Would you let my father know what I said?”

Tears quietly spilled from Davun’s eyes.

“You’ve grown so much, Your Highness.”

“Yeah. Perhaps I’ve finally made steps towards adulthood.”

With that, Erhard resumed his teppo practice. Davun sneaked into the shadow of a building and left.

The castle of the Demon Lord, in the center of the demonic lands, towered over them. On its throne sat its gorgeous owner.

“I see, Davun. That wayward son of mine...”

“Your Majesty, I think you have a wonderful son.”

“You’re just soft on him because you’ve been watching him all along. So, he intends to atone for ten years and then go on a journey? Not bad, not bad at all.”

“Huh?”

“He tried to seize that kingdom through cowardly means and present it to me. If, after all that, he’d accepted this offer, I’d have given up on him and probably made him the commander of some unit that I’d send to the worst place I could think of.”

“What?!”

“What kind of idiot uses his demonic powers to give away his place in life to his dad? Can’t believe he thought that would please me. I loathe such fools.”

“Y-Your Majesty! Wh-While this is, admittedly, very much like you...”

The Demon Lord spun his glass of bloodred spirits around, a satisfied smile on his face.

“And it’s good that he lost. My praise to the one who beat him. That must’ve put him in his place. Strong are those who have known defeat and recovered from it. Can’t wait to see it.” He laughed for a short while. “Sumo, eh? That martial art has my attention. They say it makes use of holy-type ritualistic magic, but maybe we can repurpose it for use with demonic magic instead! Oh, I cannot wait. Gather my best troops!”

“Wh-What are you going to do?”

“What do you think? We’ll show up to their Grand Sumo with our demonic sumo! Heh heh, my blood stirs. Find someone who can take human form, slip them into Aryagard, and have them study sumo!”

“Yes, Your Majesty!”

Thus, an air of danger emanated from the land of demons.

In the courtyard of the sumo hall in Aryagard, Adela was sweeping the ground while humming a tune.

“It’s a miracle everything worked out. The future of milady and Prince Richie is safe now.”

As it was still morning, few people could be seen in the vicinity.

“New cultures were brought to this world along with lots of fine new food, and this sumo hall can even be used to import all sorts of commodities. What more could I ask for?” Adela brought her hands together in prayer, still carrying her broom. “May this peaceful Age of Grand Sumo go on forever.”

And then, using the broom as a microphone, she began singing a sumo jinku.

“Haa... Promoters, organizers...and everyone who’s been with us... ♪ Thank you for everything you’ve done for us... ♪ With great reluctance...we must part ways today... ♪”

Adela’s beautiful singing resounded through the courtyard.

“May your families thrive and your town prosper even after we leave... ♪ We shall pray from the shadows...that no malady may spread... ♪”

Someone else’s delightful singing had come from the shade. It was Floortje, wearing a mawashi on top of her dress. She drew close to Adela and sang together with her.

“We must now continue...our tour of the provinces... ♪ Till the big day comes, and we fight to climb the ranks... ♪ Should fate allow it...we shall come here once more... ♪”

A sweet soprano voice had joined their song. Its owner was Prince Richie, looking gallant in his mawashi, singing with a smile on his face.

“And if that day comes...please give us even more of your support... ♪ Such is our...yo-hohohoi... ♪ Haa... Sincere request... ♪”

The three's jinku chorus disappeared into the clear blue sky of the royal capital. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*



Extra Stories

Fure Daiko

This story took place at the Hobbema residence in Aryaka's royal capital. Floortje, daughter of the marquis the place belonged to, was visibly dejected, eyes downcast. Using a silver hairbrush, her maid Adela combed her mistress's hair as it gently swayed in spring's mild breeze.

"Why the long face, milady?"

"I don't want to go to the graduation dance party today, Adela."

"Why not? You've been studying in that magic school every day and you've finally graduated. Everyone will be dancing and celebrating. There won't be another graduation party if you miss this one."

"But...I'm scared..."

"Come on! Stop brooding so much, milady. You're getting married to First Prince Jonas in early summer. Stay positive!"

Floortje sighed. She wanted to tell Adela about the numerous alarming events at school, but couldn't find the words. Something just felt off about her experiences, and she'd always had a hard time expressing such things. She couldn't be certain she wasn't overthinking this either. If she'd had any proof, she could've had the teachers do something. Alas, it was but a feeling.

Jaromíra Šťastná, daughter of a baron. Despite being called the Saint of Light, she bore ill will against Floortje and sought to ruin her life—or such was Floortje's premonition. She couldn't put it into words, which left her sitting there with a gloomy expression.

The cheerful sound of drumming reached Floortje's ears, coming from nowhere in particular.

"Someone is drumming, Adela."

“I don’t hear anything,” replied the maid after pausing to listen.

“Really? It’s faint and must be coming from far away, but it’s definitely the sound of drums. It’s a happy tune that raises your spirits.”

The splendid tune seemed to herald the beginning of something.

Close to the west gate of Aryagard, Aryaka’s royal capital, was a temple dedicated to the goddess Florence. She had gathered a large following as the goddess of love and war. In the office of this enormous, magnificent temple, Ove, captain of the order of Temple Knights, was busy with paperwork.

“Another discharge?”

“Yes, sir. He claims it’s for health reasons, but it’s clear he’s displeased with the saint...”

“The saint is always right. We commoners are unable to comprehend her ways. Don’t you dare utter words of disrespect for her in front of me ever again.”

“Sir, yes, sir!”

Sir Ove’s aide knelt and lowered his head.

Suddenly, the cheerful sound of drums entered Ove’s ear. It was faint and distant, but he most definitely heard this happy, uplifting tune. *Dum-ba-ba-dum-dum-badump!* Listening to it lifted Ove’s spirits. *Why...? What makes this rhythm feel so bright, so pure...?* Unable to find the answers, Ove listened closely nonetheless.

The lowlying area of Aryagard had a dojo in which Aryaka wrestling was taught. In this surprisingly tidy place, Clifton, the son of a count, was busy with intense practice. His master, Yustin, called out to him.

“Hey apprentice, don’t you have a graduation dance party tonight? How about you lay off the training and go get ready to escort some girl or something?”

“I don’t know... It feels so boring.”

“Ain’t there a girl you like? Saint What’s-her-name.”

“Yeah, a girl from some bakery who got adopted by the baron and even hooked up with the prince. Talk about rags to riches.”

“Feels like fiction, all right. Don’t it sound fun?”

Yustin picked up two enormous training clubs and began swinging them around.

“I don’t know, Master... I kinda feel like there’s something fishy about all this.”

“Like what?”

“Like this is all part of some plan. Like we’re all pawns, you know? I don’t have any proof, though.”

“Huh. Well, don’t let it get to you. There is no truth for a wrestler but his body. Status, reputation, love—those are all illusions.”

“Heh, sounds about right. The only truth here has to be the power contained in my empty hands.”

“Forget all that sketchy stuff like magic and faith. Charging at the opponent is all a wrestler should think about.”

A faint and distant sound of drums reached the ears of the two meatheads.

“Drums.”

“Yep. There a festival somewhere today?”

“I haven’t heard this rhythm before. It’s showy, but also powerful... I wonder...”

“Good tones, they are.”

“Agreed.”

The master and apprentice pricked up their ears and continued to listen to the drums.

In close proximity to Aryagard was a base of the Aryakan army. As he was

training his troops, the colossally built General Maurilio looked up at the sky.

“No, I have my orders... We soldiers are meant to simply do as told...”

Though the general’s words signified his faith in his leader, they did little to lift the shadows from his face.

He, too, heard the faint sound of drums. He thought it might be his military band playing the marching drums, but there was no such practice in today’s schedule. It was an uplifting, happy tune, as if there was nothing to worry about in this world.

“Should I stop them...? But it’s already too late...”

On his face appeared a twisted, self-deprecating smile.

The sound of drums spread through various towns and could even be heard in the Gadang Highlands, located to the east of the royal capital. Standing in merciless sunlight, an elderly man in rags turned to look at the sky.

“Drums from the sky...? It’s rare to hear the sounds of a festival in the royal capital all the way out here...”

Crouched beside the man, an enormous scarlet dragon raised its head.

“Do you hear it too, Phalaris?”

Phalaris, as the dragon was called, replied with a soft growl. The pair continued to listen to the faint drumming.

The Aryakan magic school stood close to the royal castle. A crowd of first-and second-year students who couldn’t join the graduation dance party was gossiping in one of its corridors.

“They say Lady Floortje was terribly rude to Saint Jaromíra.”

“It’s jealousy. Saint Jaromíra is simply too wonderful.”

“I’m sure she’ll pay a heavy price for it soon enough.”

“Oho ho ho, serves her right.”

Listening to the chatter of her underclassmen from the other side of a wall,

where she was seated on the couch in the student council room, Jaromíra, the Saint of Light, had a satisfied smile on her face. First Prince Jonas, on the other hand, looked nervous.

“Are you sure it’s going to work out, Jaromíra?”

“There’s nothing to worry about, Jonas. Everything will go off without a hitch. You will be king soon.”

“But my brother, he’s done nothing wrong...”

“He’s adorable, but he stands in the way of our glory. There’s no choice—he has to disappear.”

Jonas sighed.

“I know. The plan is already in motion; it’s too late for worries.”

“That’s right. Jonas, you and I will rule over this whole kingdom.”

The two smiled at each other.

A faint drumming reached their ears.

“What is that sound? I hate it.”

“Really? I like it, it’s a cheerful rhythm.”

Jaromíra grimaced and covered her ears with her hands. The drumming went on and on.

The captain of the royal guard, Erhard, sat in his office located in the castle’s east tower. He was silently looking out the window.

“Heh heh, that was easier than expected. Everything is going exactly as planned.” He sipped his fragrant, bloodred tea. “This kingdom will be mine soon. And then, surely...”

The same faint drumming reached his ears.

“Drums? But from where...?”

Erhard closed his eyes and listened. The delightful, cheerful rhythm raised his spirits ever so slightly. And though it was barely noticeable, he began to shake

his head in time with the music.

The sound of drums had swept through the beautiful lands of Aryaka. But nobody realized this was Fure Daiko—the drumming used to announce the impending start of major sumo tournaments. Which was par for the course, given that this world’s inhabitants had yet to hear of sumo. The sound stopped as abruptly as it had started. It would not be long before the kingdom saw its first Grand Sumo.

Erhard Sees His Hopes for the Future on a Sumo Railroad

The eastern reclaimed lands I’d been sent to were boulder-filled wastelands. The only greenery around was in the local village and in the villagers’ fields. Living in this village, I spent my days working the fields, and my nights practicing sumo. Here, there were no evening parties, no delicacies, and no high society to mingle in. All there was to do was till the soil, dig canals, plant crops, and harvest them. A simple life. You worked as long as you could, covered in dirt.

The muscles I’d used to wield my sword back in the royal guard had gotten thin. Instead, those used for sumo training and to swing a hoe were growing stronger. Every sunset, I would eat a simple meal of soup and bread, then train in sumo: I put on my mawashi, went to the pole I had at the edge of the farm, and practiced teppo. The large pole buried deep into the ground shook under my strikes, my body heating up in the process. I would do shiko and splits, and shuffle my feet around the ring. My hips weren’t fond of this training, but I pressed on with no heed for the pain.

The pride over being the Demon Lord’s son. The feeling of superiority over all humans because of my natural talents. My formerly luxurious life of nobility. My foster father, my mother, my brothers who quarreled without end.

My rigid training washed away all such concerns. It cleansed my dark thoughts and made me a simple creature. I would work hard, devoting myself to training. As I looked at the crude practice ring I had set up with bales, what passed through my mind was this: standing in that narrow circle only four and a half meters in diameter, sumo wrestlers used their whole might for the bout.

Pushing techniques, throwing techniques, feints, harite: with such a broad selection, the tactical options were limitless. The sheer depth of this martial art was staggering.

I wanted to try again. To do sumo with Floortje one more time. She already held the top rank at the royal sumo hall, having become a yokozuna. She walked in heaven, while an exile like me was stuck on earth. But one day...one day I wanted to wrestle with her again. To show her what I was capable of after many years of constant training. This was the thought that was constantly on my mind as I trained until the clock struck midnight, at which point I would finally go to bed, exhausted.

“Morning, Erhard! I brought you some bread.”

“Thank you, Lotta.”

When I woke in the morning, my neighbor’s girl had brought me bread. I relied on them for my meals.

“It’s been three years now since you came here. Funny how everyone was scared of you at first, but now they all depend on you, right?”

“The villagers have been a big help.”

“It’s because you work hard, plus you’re strong.”

“No. I still have a long way to go.”

“And that attitude is why everyone likes you so much,” said Lotta with a smile.

But I meant what I said. A man like me did not deserve anyone’s love. I had brought chaos to the kingdom and many died as a result. Their deaths were my responsibility, and mine alone.

Before noon, I would help on Lotta’s farm. Her father Maxim was a pleasant fellow who would do sumo with me on his days off.

“Not that I ever got close to beating you, Erhard.”

“It’s still important to have a practice partner.”

“Nobody in the village is any match for you in sumo.”

I felt my life being heavily dependent on the kindness of the locals. In the past, I thought I could do anything on my own. I believed I could reach the greatest heights and become superior to every man alive. But that had all been a lie. Floortje had taught me how powerless I truly was. Which was why I told myself it was time to train my mind and body.

I helped Maxim with harvesting vegetables, gathering ripe cabbages in wooden crates and putting them on his cart. They would be sold in a nearby town. The local villagers were pinching pennies, earning only a scanty livelihood from their farmwork. From early morning till late in the evening they wrestled with soil, tied ropes, and looked after their livestock, with barely any time left for anything else. The only time in the year they could indulge in something was during the harvest festival in autumn.

I had spent three years helping the local farmers. The farmlands had spread a little bit over that period of time, and there was one new canal. My atonement would take seven years more. I was certain that by then the farmlands would have grown a little bit more, and the canals would have become a little wider. A down-to-earth lifestyle such as this one involved taking your time and moving forwards with small steps, as I had come to learn.

“Okay, I’m off!”

Lotta climbed aboard the horse-drawn cart and headed to the nearby town. Maxim and I moved to clean the canals. If you didn’t do this every day, they’d get clogged up with fallen leaves and withered branches.

“By the way, Erhard, have you heard?”

“Hm? Heard what?”

“Inspector Gómez has reached retirement age. He said a new one will be coming to replace him.”

“I’m not surprised. He’s getting too old for this.”

“You’ve got that right. Poor fellow got sent all the way to this countryside at his age. He should be staying in the capital and taking care of his health.”

“Agreed.”

To ensure I would stay in this village and not run away, an inspector had been sent from the capital. Until now it had been Gómez, a good-natured old man with a drinking habit. I hoped the new one would be nice too. But I wouldn't be left wondering for long: he came by as I was having lunch at Maxim's house.

"My name is Inspector Joseph. I believe we'll be seeing more of each other."

"Oh, welcome, welcome. My name is Maxim. Pleased to meet you."

"Erhard. Pleased to meet you."

He remained silent.

The man had a grim look in his eyes. He looked the extremely serious type, standing so upright it was as if his tall back had a pole inside. Rejecting Maxim's offer of joining us for lunch, he returned to his lodging.

"What an austere man. I hope he manages to fit in around here."

"So do I..."

That look in his eyes seemed familiar. *Where have I seen it...?* And then it hit me: I saw those eyes on myself all the time, back when I lived in the royal capital and believed there was nothing I couldn't do.

Having finished farmwork for the day and eaten a simple dinner, I resumed my sumo training. After doing stretching exercises, splits, and shiko, I lowered my stance and walked around the ring, and then—teppo. My training could've been more comprehensive had there been a practice partner around. This thought had visited me many times, but there were few youngsters in the village, and they all went to sleep when it got late. I couldn't ask them to come practice sumo with me after their heavy daytime labor. Thus, teppo naturally came to take up a bigger chunk of my training time than it normally would have.

Had I become stronger? Was I ever going to reach the top level of sumo, Floortje's domain? My anxiety grew over time, with nothing to offset it. In sublimation, I channeled my worries and doubts into my training. All I had to do was deliver light strikes at this pole in front of me.

Suddenly, I was illuminated by a lantern.

"What are you up to?!"

I turned around to see Inspector Joseph. The light from his lantern didn't do me the favor of illuminating his eyes, so I couldn't get a good look at them.

"Sumo training."

"Cease at once! You are a criminal! You are not worthy of practicing the great art that saved this kingdom!"

"Crown Princess Floortje gave her..."

Could I say she had given her permission? The last time I saw her, she told me to practice sumo. Yustin showed me her stable where I studied the proper ways of training. That was all there had been to it.

"Cease your training immediately! You shall never get to do sumo! Training for it is a waste of your time!"

"Yes, sir," I said after a pause and stepped away from the pole.

The inspector was unceremoniously thrusting his lantern at me, practically sticking it in my face, the whole time. His voice bore animosity.

"Wait!"

Lotta came running out in her nightwear and prostrated herself before Joseph. The lantern highlighted the color of the unbleached cotton of the clothes she wore.

"Sumo is all he has left! The only time he gets to do it is during the ritual matches held at the village shrine during the annual festival! Please don't take it from him!!!"

"Yeah, how can you ban Erhard from sumo? He's the best rikishi in all the nearby villages."

Maxim showed up behind Lotta, the light of his lantern gently illuminating the surroundings. Joseph looked a little worried.

"Do you two know what this man has done in the royal capital?"

"We know! They kidnapped the king, tried to harm His Highness Prince Richie and pin it on Her Highness Princess Floortje, and he was the mastermind behind that plot. But does that really mean you have to take away something he's so

passionate about?! Please, let him keep doing sumo!”

Lotta kept her head pressed to the surface of my practice ring. Why, oh why would she go that far for someone like me? I felt my chest growing hot. Maxim went down on his knees and prostrated himself too. Joseph wavered. One step towards the edge of the ring.

“Forget it! You two can prostrate yourselves all you want, but this man committed a grave offense! He was supposed to be executed, and only got away with his life because that was necessary not to execute the former prince Jonas! As long as I live, I shall never allow him to do sumo!” Spitting out such a proclamation, Inspector Joseph took his leave.

Those of us left behind looked at each other.

“Thank you. I was happy you stood up for me.”

“You’ve done so much for the village, Erhard. It’s not like you’re doing anything wrong by practicing sumo after sunset.”

“Yeah! What a terrible man that was.”

“Such is the weight of my crimes. I’m only alive by sheer luck.”

That was why, I thought. *That* must have been why I was devoting myself to sumo. It may just have been keeping me alive.

The following day, Lotta came running to my hut.

“Pop left the house! Here, look.”

She gave me a note, evidently left behind by Maxim. It read: *Don’t look for me, I’ll be back soon.*

“Where did he go...?” I wondered.

“One of our horses is gone—I can’t find it anywhere.”

Just where had Maxim gone at his age? Thankfully, he had apparently taken some money with him.

I helped at Lotta’s and others’ farms, cleaned the canals, and before I knew it, the sun had set. For a moment I thought it was time for sumo training, but then

I remembered the inspector's words and abandoned the idea. Without sumo, there was nothing for me to do. Performing maintenance on my farming tools was one way of killing time, but I was soon finished with that. I noticed the light of a lantern approach my hut, but once its owner saw I wasn't training, it was gone. Wondering where Maxim had gone, I fell asleep.

I saw a dream. In that dream, I had spent the remaining seven years at these farms, having abandoned sumo. I had come to accept it at some point, married into the family of the widow living on the western edge of the village, and had lots of children. I was happy, working in the village as one of the locals. The villagers had accepted me and even made me vice-mayor. And though I wasn't entirely without regrets, I thought it was merely a part of life as I patted the head of one of my children. *Not half bad*. It's good to have a family, to have someone you love, I thought.

When I woke up, I was shaking, drenched in sweat. I had seen a happy nightmare. The most terrifying thing about it was that such happiness was well within my reach, and all I had to do was choose it. The feeling of my child's head didn't leave my hand for a while. I apologized in my mind to my sons and daughters from the dream. "Daddy doesn't want all this. I'm sorry." Tears had welled up in my eyes before I knew it.

Three days later, it finally became clear where Maxim had gone. As we were clearing weeds from a wheat field, Lotta directed her attention at the sky.

"What's that...?"

Something red and glistening had appeared in the sky, coming from the west and getting larger by the second.

"It's a dragon."

A scarlet dragon, the size of the mayor's residence, was flying our way. The villagers began to voice their surprise. Wild dragons were rare. Had this one come to attack the village? Though I could fight it off, its size meant it would probably manage to hurt the villagers before leaving.

Once it had come close enough, I noticed several people riding on the back of its head: a noblewoman in red, a maid, and a middle-aged peasant. The peasant

kept waving his hand our way. It was Maxim. He had come back to his farm riding a red dragon, and he had brought Floortje with him.

In the three years I hadn't seen her, Floortje had grown a little more mature, and more beautiful. She was still just as slender too: one wouldn't think a girl of her build could possibly do sumo. The unannounced visit of the crown princess had the entire village welcoming her on their knees and keeping their heads low. She helped Maxim climb down first, then descended together with her maid.

"I've brought Floortje, Erhard. It's going to be all right now."

"You've been to the royal capital, huh."

"Well... I went by horse to the county town and found Yustin there. When I explained the situation, he took me with him in a speedy coach, and the two of us raced to the royal capital to see Floortje."

Well, that certainly worked out well. Had he not gotten a hold of Yustin in the county town, he would've been stuck traveling to the royal capital for another week. And then he could've run out of money or been robbed by bandits. He had undertaken such a journey on his emaciated horse without regard for such dangers, all for my sake.

"Thank you."

"Oh, don't mention it." My dear neighbor was being shy.

Inspector Joseph stepped forth, continuously bowing.

"Greetings, Your Highness. What brings you to such a remote place?"

"Maxim tells me you've banned Erhard from sumo. Is that correct?"

"Yes, I judged it too much of a luxury for an exile," he said after a brief pause.

"A luxury? Sumo hardly brings any expenses with it."

"It is not about money, it is about honor. A sumo fever is currently sweeping through the whole of Aryaka. It is a glorious martial art that saved our kingdom in times of peril. I couldn't possibly allow the man who orchestrated the rebellion to do sumo," spoke Joseph, having raised his head to look at Floortje directly.

“So that’s how you see this.”

“Yes, Your Highness. I believe a rebel who ought to have been executed does not deserve this kingdom, this village, or the people who live in it. Should I be ordered to stand down, I shall request to be relieved of my post as an inspector.”

The massive red dragon entered the conversation.

“This guy is a real stickin-the-mud.”

“Phalaris! I believe you’ve been told to assume human form if you want to speak.”

“Whoops.”

Smoke covered the dragon, and then was blown away by the wind, revealing a stark naked boy. Floortje’s maid hurried to put a robe over him.

“I don’t think sumo is so full of honor and glory. It’s an awesome martial art, but why not let even criminals do it if they want to?”

“But Lord Phalaris, we would be setting a bad example. The people, they...”

“Ugh, I can’t do this. These bureaucrats are so stubborn.” Phalaris shrugged.

“What do *you* want to do, Erhard?” spoke Floortje.

“I... A criminal like me cannot desire anything. I shall abide by the kingdom’s rulings.”

“And how do you really feel?”

“I...”

I wanted to do sumo. But to desire such a thing...

“Be frank.”

“I want to do sumo. Even if it’s only training and nothing else.”

“Good—I was worried you were tired of this life and wanted to be done with sumo.”

“Then you needn’t worry, Your Highness. Erhard trains in silence every single day after working the farms,” spoke Maxim, leaning precariously far forward.

“Glad to hear it.”

“With all due respect, Your Highness, I insist this man should be banned from sumo.”

“Please, Your Highness. We beg you, let Erhard do sumo.”

Maxim and Lotta prostrated themselves before Floortje, their foreheads touching bare ground. Why were they going this far for me? I felt tears welling up. My attempt to hold them in proved futile.

“Maxim, Lotta...”

Floortje clapped her hands together.

“Then why don’t we decide through sumo?” she suggested with a smile.

“Come forth, do...” Floortje stopped short of completing the summoning spell, instead staring intently at the crude ring I had near my hut. “Since there’s a ring here already, let’s use it. Fix it up, Adela.”

“Yes, milady.”

The maid in a yellowish coat began repairs on the ring, using a hoe. She also installed new bales in place of the damaged ones. Floortje stood in front of the inspector.

“Why don’t you have a bout with Erhard and the winner will have his way?”

“It is acceptable.”

“Are you sure? He’s strong.”

“I have confidence in my sumo too. Losing to a criminal would be out of the question.”

With that, Joseph took off the top of his uniform, revealing his powerful muscles.

“I see you’ve been working out. How is your sumo?”

“General Maurilio taught me some while I served.”

“You were in the army?”

“Yes. You’ve sent me and my horse flying, Your Highness. I traveled with you

until we liberated the royal capital.”

“Were you a scout?”

“Yes—the very first one you sent flying, Your Highness.”

So Joseph had been in that army I had sent after Floortje. It stood to reason he regarded the liberation of the capital, as well as the sumo that had allowed it, as something sacred.

I entered my hut and put on my mawashi with Maxim’s help.

“There’s no way you’re going to lose, right?”

“I wonder about that. He studied sumo properly, unlike me.”

“It’ll be fine, I’m sure.” Maxim laughed lightly and patted me on the shoulder.

Three years prior to this, I’d had a good bout with Floortje. I’d relied on my demonic strength and nothing else: no technique, no tactics, just the sumo of a savage beast. I couldn’t do such a thing again. I couldn’t show Floortje, a yokozuna, such unseemly sumo. If I didn’t fight within the confines of human strength, using the sumo I had cultivated, I couldn’t look her in the face ever again. Even if I lost to Inspector Joseph as a result.

Stepping out of my hut, I saw the inspector wearing a mawashi too. His stare directed at me was as grim as ever. There was animosity in his eyes.

Once Floortje’s maid stepped away, the crude ring I used to know looked good as new. *Excellent work*. Creating and servicing the dohyō in sumo is the job of a yobidashi—and come to think of it, this maid *was* a yobidashi. That logo on the back of her happi coat was proof.

“Today’s yobidashi will be Adekichi from my stable, and I, Floortje, shall perform the duties of the referee.”

As Floortje lightly waved a war fan, the maid opened her folding fan and announced me and the inspector.

I climbed the dohyō. It had been roughly half a year since my last bout. This opponent was far more serious than those at the ritual matches conducted at the village shrine during the annual festival. Standing on the other side of the lines in the ground, Inspector Joseph bent his knees. So did I.

“Face each other.”

Our tension grew. The space between the two of us began to fill with hostility that twisted and warped as mine collided with his. *Ah, I finally get to fight a real rikishi.* My heart pounded with excitement. As our breathing synchronized, the two of us moved with our whole bodies, crashing into each other.

“Hakkeyoi!” Floortje raised her war fan.

After my opponent and I had a literal head-on collision, we immediately grappled each other. My right hand went for the inspector’s mawashi, as did his for mine. We were locked up. I pushed and pushed—pushing sumo is the basic element of this martial art. You use all of your strength to push the opponent in front of you until they’re close to the edge of the ring, then you push them out. Those are the basics of sumo bouts.

Managing to push my opponent a little bit, I poured all my strength forward. *This is the way to go.* Utilizing what I had learned to be correct from all my training, I moved forwards and pushed the inspector. Joseph tightened his arms under my armpits, pulled up my mawashi, and lowered his own center of mass, but it wasn’t enough to stop my very slow but gradual advance. Apparently, when you manage to push your opponent straight out of the ring without letting them use any techniques in retaliation, it’s called “railroading,” presumably because it invokes the image of twin lines in the ground, similar to those which some vehicle called a “train” requires to move. And my railroad was seeing slow but steady movement.

“My good friend died because of you,” Joseph whispered in my ear. “His name was Edmé Mathieu. He was slain by the king’s guards during the kidnapping.”

Edmé? I remembered him. A cheerful subordinate of mine. I saw him smiling often. He was looking forward to marrying his well-behaved fiancée come autumn. *Thump!* I felt a shock spread through my chest, and Joseph managed to push me one step back. I had put Edmé under Ove’s command for that kidnapping. Edmé had cut down that guardsman, but ended up dying as well.

“Edmé trusted you. He always told me how great a man you were.”

Edmé smiled in my memory. It was a radiant memory that nonetheless

evoked the smell of impending doom. What had become of his fiancée? *Thump!* Another shock, and another bit of ground lost. *I must focus on the bout right now.*

“You let a good man die believing it was to make the world a better place, and you still get to live and do sumo?”

I... I... There was nothing I could say to that. The deaths of everyone who’d fallen in that rebellion were on me. It was I who had deceived Jaromíra and Prince Jonas, and no one else.

My leg touched a bale on the edge of the ring. I had been pushed that far already. My breathing was rough; I couldn’t get much strength out. Was this it? Was I going to lose? Just like when I had lost to Floortje, was I going to end up on the ground again? All my sins had come streaming back to my mind, robbing me of strength. Joseph strained his shoulder muscles.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you criminal scum!”

Thump! An even stronger shock rippled through my chest.

I stopped it. I had lost on the emotional level, and yet I stopped it. Regret was ripping through my strength, and yet I stopped it. There shouldn’t have been a logical reason why I managed to stop Joseph’s overwhelming advance, and yet I did.

“Erhard!!! Believe in your sumo!”

When I heard Maxim’s shout, my world changed colors. Something creaked deep in my heart. As the cage around it began to crumble and scatter, that something ever so slowly came back to life, moved by an unbelievable force summoned from the void. *The spirit of sumo.* Was that what this was? I felt the level of omnipotence one would expect from a god of the underworld lending you their power. Unlimited strength flowed through my body, filling me to the brim.

I pushed. Joseph tried to stop me, a pained look on his face, to no avail. I pushed. That was all there was to it. I would cast aside my past regrets, my present anguish, my anxiety about the future, and become a mere sumo wrestler. For that is the way of sumo.

“Damn it, how can a criminal like you...”

“Words.”

“What?!”

“There’s no place for words here, Joseph.”

Human emotions, my past transgressions, how much I had trained—none of that mattered anymore. I *was* sumo. I was the tip of a mighty force surging for the heavens. No words can do it justice. No intelligence can help grasp it. It’s not good or evil. You refine your technique through training, build muscles, and do whatever you can till the moment you enter the ring. Once in the ring, you let the gods decide the outcome. There is no winning or losing—it’s all about two cultivated forces coming into contact with each other. *That* is sumo.

I pushed farther and farther. Joseph tried to trip me, but my pushing served to protect me from it.

“You can do it, Erhard!”

“Erhard!!!”

I heard Maxim and Lotta cheer for me. And not just them, but other villagers too.

“Give it all you’ve got!”

My pushing was straightforward and clumsy, but it worked. It didn’t matter whether I had a teppo pole or Joseph in front of me. I charged up my sumo spirit as much as I could, and it poured strength into my limbs in return. In a moment that felt like an eternity, the inspector’s left leg stepped outside the ring.

“Erhard!” Floortje raised her war fan to the east.

I...won? I realized I was panting. Joseph’s breathing was rough too as he sat on the ground outside the ring. I offered him a hand. With a puff, he took it and got up. The grim look in his eyes was gone.

“As agreed upon, Erhard shall be allowed to continue his sumo training. Any objections, Inspector?”

“No, Your Highness.”

“If you have any other problems with Erhard, train here together with him until they can be resolved.”

I could train with Joseph? That was going to be a big help: it was sure to let my sumo reach new heights. His ability would allow it.

“Yes, Your Highness.” Joseph bowed to Floortje.

“Heh heh heh! Man, sumo is great!” spoke Phalaris, beaming.

“Erhard.”

“Yes?”

“Your pushing sumo was splendid. That must be thanks to your training.”

“Yes.”

Joy spread through my chest. I had earned Floortje’s recognition, an outcome gratifying enough to make me shiver.

“You have seven years left. Train hard and return to the sumo hall when it’s time. I’ll be waiting.”

“I’ll be there.”

Seven more years, and I would be allowed back into the royal capital. Allowed to participate in bouts at the sumo hall. Would I ever be able to best Floortje? I was looking forward to it already.

When I turned to look at the ring, there were tracks on it left by my feet. Twin lines that stretched from the edge, unbending. A “railroad.” I felt as if it led to the Aryakan Kokugikan, far beyond the horizon.

Special Extra: In the Age of Grand Sumo, a Girl Comes from the East

I walked through the main street of the royal capital, Crown Prince Richie's hand in mine. As it was late autumn, the skies were clear and it had grown a little cold. The roads were littered with fallen leaves. The prince and I, however, were warm in our winter clothes.

The royal capital had fully returned to its peaceful life, leaving no traces of the decay it had seen in early summer. Half a year after the period known as the Rebellion of Prince Jonas, the locals seemed to have calmed down. This cold late-autumn city certainly had its charm. I was window-shopping, buying roasted chestnuts at stalls, and otherwise enjoying my date with the crown prince.

"Look, Floortje! That girl we just passed has a mawashi on top of her dress! It's all the rage, huh."

"I guess so, Your Highness. Oh, look, there's a street dohyō over there."

It had been half a year since the rebellion. I had broken up my original stable into several, sharing my ten thousand students with stables led by Lord Clifton, Yustin, and General Maurilio. In autumn we held the very first proper tournament in the sumo hall—fifteen days of heated bouts. I was glad to see Crown Prince Richie score a winning record and significantly climb the ranks. The sumo hall was constantly full, and the tournament gave birth to a sumo fever that would sweep through the kingdom, but most of all the royal capital.

"I still can't get over how exciting that last tournament was, Floortje."

"I know how you feel. Yustin and Maurilio gave a good performance."

Lord Clifton had more losses than wins, though. It appeared the main characters of *The Rondo of Light and Darkness* couldn't gain or lose weight, so his slim build put him at a disadvantage in sumo. I had the same troubles myself, still unable to gain any weight or muscle whatsoever.

Thud! A young wrestler fell near us, having been thrown out of the ring by his opponent on the street dohyō.

“Ha ha ha! Is this the best you locals can do? Such a disappointment.”

“Screw you, amateur! How dare you?!”

“Ha ha ha, you alone are no match for me! Why don’t you all come at me at once?!”

“Don’t fuck with me!!!”

A small Asian-looking girl with bobbed hair was standing on the dohyō with her arms folded, staring down three hoodlums with a smug look on her face. I could even say she looked Japanese. Had she been reincarnated here too? Then again, your appearance in this world seemed to have little in common with how you had looked in your past life. Despite the current height of fashion, a dress with a mawashi on top, she had a mawashi on over a leotard. Clearly, she had given the matter some serious thought: a dress is pretty, but it’s not the best outfit for sumo bouts.

“Stop right there!”

Whoops. I couldn’t help calling out when I saw those three climbing back up the dohyō.

“Gah! It’s the yokozuna Floortje!”

“And His Highness is here too!”

“Wow, we’re so happy to meet you in person!”

The trio looked really happy when they saw me and the prince. Incidentally, I had had a perfect record last tournament, succeeding to the name of the first yokozuna.

“How cowardly do three wrestlers have to be to gang up on a lone girl?”

“B-But this Asian...”

“Sumo is a ritual performed one-on-one. Refrain from such contemptible actions in the future.”

The three thuggish wrestlers looked dejected after my harsh scolding.

“We will. Sorry.”

“I’m sorry.”

“We were in the wrong.”

They were surprisingly meek.

“Well, well! Isn’t that Floortje? What do you say to a bout?” uttered the girl. She was a cheeky one, it seemed. Not that I didn’t approve.

“What?! Are you for real?!”

“Sure, you’re strong, but that’s a yokozuna you’re talking to!”

“And it’s rude to make her fight on a street dohyō!”

“Yeah, I guess professionals don’t fight in such places...”

The girl was snickering as she provoked me. Something was off about this...

“Are you going to fight her, Floortje?”

“I would never turn down a challenger.”

“I knew you wouldn’t. Okay, I’ll be the referee!”

The girl laughed as though I had fallen into her trap. She reminded me of Erhard. Or, more specifically...of demons? Oh well, I figured I would find out once we started. Using the dressing room, I put on a black mawashi on top of my dress.

“Holy crap, I get to see Floortje’s bout this close?!”

“And with His Highness as the referee!”

“All thanks to you, girl!”

These hoodlums were rather fickle.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Kukuri. I’m from the east.”

Kukuri? As in Kukurihime no Mikoto, the deity that in my past life was enshrined at Shirayama Hime Shrine in Hakusan City in Japan? I couldn’t sense anything divine about this girl, at least.

“Face each other.”

Crown Prince Richie stepped between the two of us, using the palm of his hand as a substitute for a war fan. His twitching cat ears were precious.

My breathing synchronized with that of Kukuri. We touched the ground with our fists at the same time and charged at each other.

“Hakkeyoi!”

Crash! One wouldn’t expect such a thunderous sound to come from two women coming into contact. I managed to push Kukuri at first, but she absorbed the impact and held her ground after that. We grabbed each other’s mawashi—I did it in a left-handed underarm grip, she did it in a right-handed one—then we both did an outside grip with the remaining arm, and we were locked up. She was *really* flexible and her center of mass was *really* low. Something struck me as odd about her fighting style. She was almost like a spider...

“Still in, still in!”

The way she moved and kept her center of mass low piqued my interest. But her sumo technique had a long way to go. I used my arm holding her mawashi in an outside grip to pull it towards myself and threw her out of the ring.

“Floortje!” Crown Prince Richie raised his palm towards me.

“Wow, that was an awesome overarm throw!”

“You pulled it off really well!”

“How you like that, you Asian girl?!”

Kukuri was looking up at me from below the dohyō with an expression of disbelief on her face. I extended a hand and helped her up.

“There’s a lot of depth to sumo, wouldn’t you agree?”

“I-I would! Th-Thank you so much!”

Kukuri bowed her head. It turned out this spider girl was meek too once she lost. She must’ve been sent from the Demon Lord’s army to steal the secrets of sumo.

“I see you have talent. Would you like to join a stable and get serious about sumo?”

“Huh? Um, uhh, is that okay?”

“Certainly. I think you’ll make a good wrestler.”

Now, which stable do I show her to...? In Yustin’s stable, they went all out. I figured she might like General Maurilio’s athletics-focused stable too. There was also the option of having her join my stable.

“On the west side of the Triumphal Square, you’ll find a place called ‘Clifton’s stable.’ Go there. I’ll talk to the owner for you later.”

“I-I’ll be on my way! Thank you so much!”

Lord Clifton was the accommodating type, so I was sure he would teach Kukuri even if he found out she was a demon. I wouldn’t have it any other way.

“Good for you, girl!”

“Clifton’s stable is weak. Full of handsome types, though.”

“It’s still a proper stable, anyway, so don’t worry about it.”

The three hoodlums encouraged the girl. This was the way of sumo: it forged friendships and put smiles on people’s faces.

“Thanks, guys. Sorry I was being an idiot earlier.”

“It’s fine, think nothing of it.”

“I’ll root for you if you make it to the pro scene.”

“Good luck, Kukuri!”

Seeing the four settle their differences, the crown prince let out a smile. It was precious. *Dosukoi dosukoi!*

Oh, but why was I doing sumo while we were out on a date? Naughty me.

A Somewhat Long Afterword: The Road to Creating *Grand Sumo Villainess*

I had quit writing for three years. If you asked me why, my answer would be that I was simply tired after spending the previous three years hard at work updating my mecha fantasy novel on Naro every day and barely getting any ratings or reviews. It felt like my journey had taken me very far.

My creative background

My first work was a manga. I got a magazine award as well as an editor, but things didn't really work out after that. So I ended up helping out at home while learning to use a computer and looking for ways to get back into writing.

Next, I tried my hand at visual novels. *Tsukihime* had already come out and *Higurashi* was on the way at the time. I didn't join a team, instead choosing to draw and write everything on my own. I made two games called *Mahō Shōjo Sakana* ("Magical Girl Sakana") and *Kokuto no Ken* ("Sword of the Capital"), but, well...they didn't sell much. Still, this was when I really started writing. I had to write a lot because visual novels need megabytes of text. I wrote, drew, scripted, took the finished work to Comiket, and didn't sell many copies. Such was my creative cycle at the time. This was when I met my good friend Arai Azuki.

Having learned to write novels, albeit visual ones, I then contributed to an anthology of novels and ended up making friends with lots of other people who liked writing. And where do writing enthusiasts go? That's right—to Naro.

There, I began writing a novel titled *Saenai Kōkōsei no Boku ga Oddoai no Bishōjo Madōshi ni Densetsu Robo no Sōjūshi toshite Isekai Shōkan Sareta Ken* ("I'm a Boring High School Student Who Got Summoned by a Beautiful Sorceress with Heterochromia to Pilot a Legendary Mech in a Different World") which began with a silly conversation I once had had with a friend, but, well...it wasn't popular. I think it had some readers, but nobody wrote their thoughts or

left ratings.

If you spend a long time writing new chapters for an interesting story every day, readers are sure to come to you, I thought. No such luck. I still think it gets interesting from the middle of the story, but it seems mecha doesn't do very well in light novels. Still, give it a read if you have time. Although I've yet to hear anyone say they've read all 750 episodes of it.

And so, after three years of daily updates and consistently low readership, I lost motivation. My future looked bleak to me at this point: I imagined I would idle away the rest of my life.

My return to work and starting to write *TenYuu*

Why did I come back to Naro? Because a VTuber who goes by the name Zumomo Saito tweeted about completing her playthrough of *Kokuto no Ken*, thus introducing it to her audience. People wondered whether the developer still worked on anything, and though I didn't feel like going back to making visual novels, I wanted to write something on Naro that Zumomo would enjoy. And so I wrote *TenYuu*, short for *Tensei Seijo wa Yūjō Endo wo Mezasu! Fujoshi nanoni Otome Geemu no Sekai ni Tensei shichaimashita ga Shin'yū Kyara to Ichaicha Yuri Shinagara Akuyaku Reijō to Habatsu Kōsō Shitemasu* ("A Reincarnated Saint Aims for a Friendship Ending! I'm a Yaoi Fan Who Got Reincarnated into the World of an Otome Game but I Go All Yuri on My Best Friend While Engaging in Factional Conflict with a Villainess").

It had a ludicrous title at first: "Everyone's Dream Girl Laughs Like a Cat on Catnip." In the early days, the page view count stayed pretty low, but the protagonist stood out, and that made me feel rather positive about the work.

Japanese Twitter has a popular tag that takes you to novels written by the person who retweeted your post, and I put the early *TenYuu* in there. And what do you know—a fellow Naro writer, Kuchinawa Sakura, read it and praised it highly. Then it saw praise from Mojizuka, Nishikawa Asahi, and other Naro writers who had designed this popular tag, and the view count ticked up. Then Mojizuka suggested I change the title, which is how it became the long one it is today. And all of a sudden the view count exploded, reaching double the

previous value. People began to write their thoughts on the work. *TenYuu* was my first novel to get on the Top By Genre list. Seeing regular comments from fans, I was suddenly filled with motivation. At present *TenYuu* has over ten thousand ratings and some hardcore fans, which makes me very happy.

The conception of *Grand Sumo Villainess*

Having realized long titles are an effective strategy on Naro, I began coming up with such titles and posting them on Twitter as practice. And as I enjoyed myself posting lots of them, I realized something: what makes these titles so effective is that they tell you what the whole work is about at a glance, and that coincides with the idea of keeping your sales pitch concise. I stuck with the practice, feeling that it was building my planning skills as well. And after some time, I posted the following title: *Sumo Lady When I Was Slapped in the Face by a Saint I Remembered That I Was in the Sumo Club in My Past Life and Now I Want to Feed the Abandoned Cat Prince Chanko!*.

Then I changed it to “Grand Sumo,” added “Villainess” and “Dosukoi Dosukoi!” and it became the full Japanese title of this work. It’s not often you have the title ready before writing the novel itself. I wasn’t planning to write it at first, but it did sound interesting. And as I went over ideas for it in my mind—such as “Purification Salt” and lines like “Open the banzuke”—I came to think it was worth a shot and started writing. I still updated *TenYuu* every day, but now I was making daily updates for *Grand Sumo Villainess* as well.

The new novel met with a positive reception and climbed the ratings. Namako@Tadanogyo wrote a review for it, and all kinds of people expressed their support as the novel gained in popularity, until it climbed to seventh place on the Top By Genre list in Isekai Romance. *Wow, this really caught on*, I thought, as I concluded the story within a hundred thousand Japanese characters. Continuing to write it was an option, but I still had *TenYuu* to work on, plus this whole novel was like a one-liner, so I judged it would be more enjoyable for the readers if it had a conclusion.

Blowing up on Twitter

Seeing a good response to *Grand Sumo Villainess*, I was considering writing another novel similarly focused on a single topic as I continued working on *TenYuu*. Then, on the 17th of October, 2020, a Twitter user named Yakitorii introduced *Grand Sumo Villainess* on her account, causing the novel to go viral.

My good friend Yoyogi told me something insane was happening with the novel's view count on Naro. Thirty thousand views in one hour—the numbers didn't feel real. It got its own page on Togetter, a Twitter aggregator website. News websites made articles about it. It was crazy. As a result, the rankings on Naro shifted so much it took first place in Isekai Romance and seventh place overall. The experience taught me how amazing it is to blow up on Twitter.

I started getting work inquiries. The very first one I got on Naro was about a manga adaptation. Likely finding the novel to greatly stir the imagination, many readers had been asking for either a manga or an anime based on *Grand Sumo Villainess*. As a writer, I would rather be adapting something into the book format instead, so I put that offer on hold. The next inquiry was from Earth Star: they offered to turn *Grand Sumo Villainess* into a book.

At this point I was worried whether it was okay to accept both offers, and have the publisher that offered it make a manga adaptation while also making it into a book at Earth Star. As I honestly voiced my concerns to the editor who had made the first offer, they gave me the helpful advice of speaking to the publisher who offered to make a book adaptation about making a manga too. And when I brought up the subject with Earth Star, the reply was, "We'll speak to our manga adaptation team." It was nice to have the synergy that comes with one publisher making two different adaptations for you.

And so it was decided Earth Star would be making both a book and a manga adaptation for me. Thus, *Grand Sumo Villainess* began to take form. Yuna Kagesaki, a veteran manga artist with anime-adaptation experience, was assigned to the manga project. Incidentally, Yuna Kagesaki really took a liking to the source material and has made storyboards for two chapters extremely quickly. She's making a superb adaptation filled with passion.

As for the book adaptation, the illustrator for it was Murakami Yuichi, whose contribution has been simply wonderful. I like Floortje's cute character design, as well as how stout Yustin looks.

I never thought I would experience the so-called Naro Dream, so I'm still bewildered by the whole thing. I believe I am only so fortunate thanks to the support of everyone who loved *Grand Sumo Villainess*.

It was the constant support of the sumo enthusiast Sanbon, the cheerful support of Tomori Rinko, the helpful Let's Read streams by Ikagaya Saito, the emphatic thoughts regarding this novel left by Rikudo Shūichiro, the writing and drawing assistance by Tosei, and support from various other people that brought *Grand Sumo Villainess* to where it is today. You have my heartfelt gratitude. *Thank you.*

Let us meet again in *Grand Sumo Villainess Z My Fluffy Find in a Burning Elven Forest* (temporary title). Dosukoi dosukoi!



Grand SUMO Villainess

1

THIS REINCARNATED RIKISHI'S
NO PUSHOVER!





Bonus Short Story

In the Age of Grand Sumo, Kukuri Joins Clifton's Stable

"I am deeply ashamed of my performance at the last tournament. I don't know how to face you now, my lady. Please accept my forgiveness."

Marchioness Miredy, a generous patron of my stable, smiled in response to my words.

"I don't mind, Clifton. Our Aryagard's Union of Upper-Class Ladies will maintain our support of your stable."

"That's a relief to hear."

She was one of the most prominent authors of weird novels about men in love with other men in the whole royal capital. If rumors were true, she used the royalties from her bestsellers to sponsor my stable.

"It's not a problem if you lose. We'd be happy if our favorite lookers won, but having one overpowered by an enormous beast of a man is another thrill in itself."

"Is that so...?"

I really couldn't understand the interests of women who wrote these sorts of novels. She would also sometimes come to our training and observe with passion in her eyes.

"So, Clifton, any luck with recruitment?"

"Not much, I'm afraid. We left a bad impression at that last tournament, and now all the promising applicants think we're weak and choose other stables."

"I see. That's unfortunate. I was hoping to see some good recruits."

"I'm sorry I couldn't meet your e—"

"Hello?" came a female voice from the entrance.

Edgar, the second best in my stable, went to see what she wanted.

“Coach, a lady wants to join the stable.”

“What...?”

“Oh my, a lady? Maybe she’s on the hunt for a handsome wrestler.”

My stable was full of those, so sometimes we would get female applicants looking to make their acquaintance.

“She seems to be serious about sumo,” added Edgar before showing the girl in.

She had a mawashi tight around what appeared to be a leotard, and a short coat on top. The girl looked Asian—a rarity in these parts—and she was pretty too. She spoke up in a loud voice.

“My name is Kukuri. Yokozuna Floortje sent me here. I want to train.”

And she had even been sent by Floortje. Clearly, I had no choice but to welcome her to the stable. I did have one concern, though: my stable had only men, all handsome and frivolous.

“Good, good, she looks promising. I’m eager to see how she grows through training.”

“What does Aryagard’s Union of Upper-Class Ladies think about women joining my stable?”

“I’m sure some of us will feel jealous, but I welcome it. I think girls who do sumo look marvelous. Rikishi aren’t my only objects of interest—I enjoy sumo too.”

My patron’s words brought me a sense of relief.

“Well then, I shall be going, Clifton. Kukuri, good luck.”

“Th-Thank you.”

Kukuri bowed to Marchioness Miredy. I was pleased to see she had good manners: girls who would come here hunting for someone handsome were always of a rotten nature.

Suddenly, Kukuri raised her face and opened her mouth in apparent

astonishment. Following her line of sight, I realized she was looking at Arachne, sitting on her web in a corner of the room.

“Oh, sorry, that’s our guardian deity. Don’t disturb her when cleaning.”

“Ah...Ah...Ah?”

My disciple, you have been brought here by the thread of fate.

“Ahh!” The girl prostrated herself all of a sudden.

“You can hear Arachne’s voice?”

“You’re...You’re not showing due reverence, sir! You’re in the presence of Arachne, the supreme deity!”

“Uhh, the supreme deity in the royal capital is Florence, the goddess of love and war.”

Worry not, Clifton, this girl is just a bit fanatical, being my disciple.

Kukuri had her forehead pressed to the gap between floorboards.

“I see you have some really devoted followers, Arachne.”

I am the supreme deity in some regions. But here in the royal capital, Florence has more power than me.

Gods are far closer to us than one might imagine, I thought.

“I am absolutely joining this stable. You don’t mind, do you, sir?”

“Uh, no, go ahead.”

How could I refuse when her eyes told me she’d kill me if I did?

For the time being, I gave Kukuri one of the vacant rooms and had her work as a live-in apprentice. She was a blessing for my stable. The good looks of its all-male membership didn’t help them do a thorough job when cleaning, a duty my new recruit handled remarkably well. She was brisk, her chanko was delicious, and overall she was a student I could only have dreamed of. She calmly brushed off my other students’ attempts to chat her up that I had been so worried about, and she used her fists on senior students who didn’t know when to stop. She was strong, both in bouts and in ordinary fights. One pervert tried to sneak into her bed at night and got a good pummeling.

“She’s a good girl, eh, Coach?” said Edgar.

“Guess we agree on that.”

“She’s so good at sumo I couldn’t possibly win a bout with her.”

“How about you train more?”

Although Edgar was the second best at my stable, he was the small but cunning type, and he weighed about as much as Kukuri. He appeared sensitive, like one of those archetypes of men from the marchioness’s novels, although his technique and sense of sumo was no laughing matter.

“And as you’d expect from a worshipper of Arachne, she fights in the spider stance.”

“Yeah, her movement is amazing. She does the spider stance better than any of us. We’re learning from her.”

The spider stance was a new sumo stance we had learned from Arachne. Since all of us in this stable were slim and had long limbs, our center of mass tended to be excessively high. The spider stance helped mitigate that issue by making the wrestler keep very close to the ground, like a spider. Although, there had always been something spiderlike about the way Kukuri moved. It seemed the girl had achieved it with a different approach. She was a spicy one too.

We trained with Kukuri, carrying ourselves low from the start of the bout. The girl’s movements were soft and didn’t have much strength behind them, and yet she had the limberness to stop your attacks without much effort. With both sides utilizing the spider stance, harite and thrusts were particularly common in bouts that involved her, followed by each wrestler trying to close the gap with their opponent while maintaining a low posture.

Practically touching the ground, Kukuri closed the distance on me. I attempted the standard counter—a slapdown from above—but she promptly leapt aside and dodged it, initiating a grapple with her forehead pressed to my side. Since it meant her mawashi was far from me, this kind of grapple usually resulted in her pushing her opponent out of the ring then and there. Her

movement technique was refined. Any lapse in concentration would lead to your being tripped and brought to the ground. The most apt description I could think of for her fighting style was low-altitude sumo. Still, when she made pushing attacks her center of mass would rise by a small degree, and you could use that opportunity to grab her mawashi and get into a grapple.

Since there were no other female rikishi in my stable, the softness of her skin would sometimes make my heart skip a beat, and I couldn't help noticing her sweet smell when we were close. Also during a grapple, her low weight put her at a disadvantage, but she utilized her whole body to gain the upper hand and secure victory. Such persistence was what I liked about this fascinating girl who grew stronger by the day. Seeing her diligence in pushing forward on the path of sumo, my other students grew more serious about their training too, not to be outdone. This positive outcome let me entertain the notion of my stable doing well in the upcoming tournament in January.

As I watched Kukuri during training, sometimes our eyes would meet. She would flash me a smile every time, and I would end up smiling as well. *This is kind of nice.*

"Oh my, oh my!" spoke Marchioness Miredy, whose arrival I had failed to notice.

"What?"

"Oh, you know, I was just thinking how nice it is to be young."

I couldn't grasp what she was talking about.

"Um, Your Ladyship, it hurts deep in my chest when I look at my coach. Is it some sort of sickness?"

"You too, Kukuri? My chest tightens too when I look at you."

"Oh, so you have that too, Coach..."

Why were the Marchioness and Edgar trembling and covering their mouths? It didn't look like either of them had a cold...

"Hey, Eddie, has your coach not reached puberty yet?"

"I hear he wasted his youth doing Aryaka wrestling with Yustin."

“Oh my, oh my! Why, this is most interesting, I have to go let everyone know. See you later, Clifton, Kukuri.”

The marchioness left, all smiles, and I was left wondering what was going on.

I’m growing a little worried about you two.

“Why, My Lady?”

“Uh, why?”

Never you mind, never you mind.

No, seriously, why? Kukuri and I exchanged glances. I really had no clue.



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Grand Sumo Villainess: Volume 1

by Kawausoutan

Translated by Adam Edited by Momo

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