

# My Pet Saintess 4



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Illustrator:

**AKIRA CASKABE**

  
**Hanashi**  
MEDIA







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ORE NO PET HA SEIJOSAMA Vol. 4

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Original Japanese edition published by TO Books, Inc.

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Hanashi Media, LLC  
838 Walker Road Suite 21-2 103  
Dover  
Delaware (DE) 19904  
<https://www.hanashi.media/>

**ISBN: 978-1-961788-21-3**



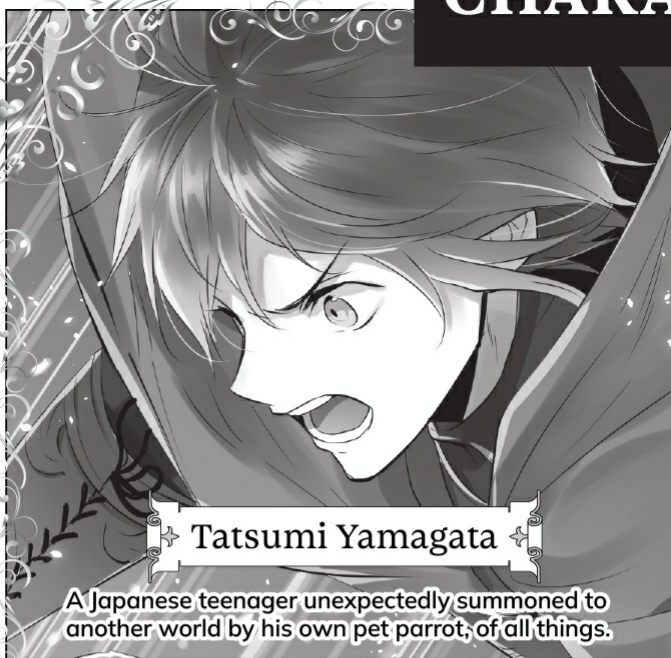






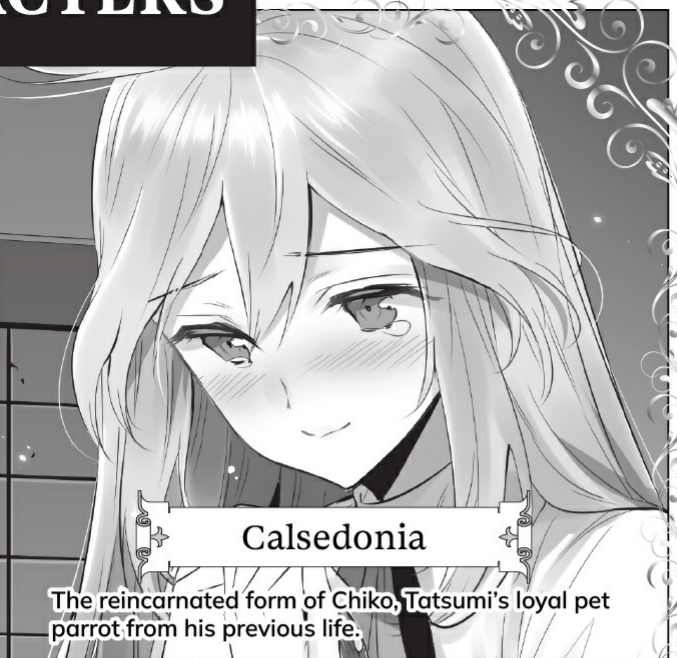


# CHARACTERS



Tatsumi Yamagata

A Japanese teenager, unexpectedly summoned to another world by his own pet parrot, of all things.



Calsedonia

The reincarnated form of Chiko, Tatsumi's loyal pet parrot from his previous life.



Mirial

Tatsumi's spirited partner in magical beast hunting, who possesses the astonishing ability to transform into a fish-person.



Barse

Tatsumi's steadfast companion, a priest-warrior of the Savaiv Temple. He's also in a relationship with a goblin, proving that love can transcend species.



Giuseppe

Calsedonia's kind and caring adoptive grandfather. As the High Priest of the Savaiv Temple, he's a pillar of guidance and wisdom.



Elle

An elf who once lived in Japan. She's a master of spirit magic and retains a deep, enigmatic connection to her previous life.



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**Thank you all**





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Afterword



# My Pet is a Saintess

# 4

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## Chapter 1: Always by Your Side

**“A**re you... Tatsumi Yamagata?” called a voice.

It was right after Tatsumi and Calsedonia had formally exchanged their engagement vows, and the pair were walking down one of the temple’s corridors together, Barse at their side. Tatsumi paused, looking back to see who had spoken. Barse followed suit.

Behind them stood a large man with a stern face—a priest of high rank, judging by his garments and the holy seal he wore. There were a dozen more male priests of various lower ranks flanking him, all looking intently in Tatsumi’s direction with extremely serious expressions. Honestly, it wouldn’t be going too far to say they were glaring at him.

The priest leading the charge outranked both Tatsumi and Barse; he seemed to belong to the senior clergy. Tatsumi had never met him before, however.

“Yes, that’s me, but...” Tatsumi trailed off, wracking his brain over why these priests would approach him out of the blue.

“These guys are fervent devotees of Lady Calsedonia,” Barse whispered discreetly in his ear. “You’d best be careful.”

Recently, rumors had been swirling within the Savaiv Temple that the Saintess they so revered had finally become engaged. Naturally, these rumors had reached the ears of Calsedonia’s followers as well. Most likely that was what had driven them to seek out Tatsumi, the Saintess’s rumored fiancé.

“I have something I want to ask you,” the stern-faced man declared, stepping forward with determination.



Tatsumi couldn't help but be a little intimidated. The man was solid with muscle from head to toe.

"You are formally engaged to the Saintess, Lady Calsedonia, correct?"

It was just as he'd expected. Tatsumi sighed internally. Still, he had nothing to hide. His engagement to Calsedonia was based on mutual consent. Furthermore, its legitimacy was acknowledged by Giuseppe, Calsedonia's adoptive father and the High Priest of the Savaiv Temple.

Reassured, Tatsumi met the senior priest's gaze directly and answered in a frank tone, "Yes, Calsedonia and I are formally engaged, and Giuseppe—the High Priest himself—served as our witness. Do you have some sort of problem with that?"

As Tatsumi had responded, the devotees standing behind the large male priest had begun to stir. By the time he'd finished, some had fallen to their knees, while others had crouched down to slam their fists into the floor. Others stood frozen in shock, or pleaded with their god—Savaiv, of course—to deny the truth of Tatsumi's words, tears streaming down their faces.

The stern-faced senior priest was one of the frozen ones. His expression was blank, almost vacant. "So, it's true..." he muttered. "The rumors... the rumors were right all along."

It seemed he couldn't believe Tatsumi's words—or rather, he didn't *want* to believe them. He quickly got a grip on himself, however, and regained his stern demeanor.

The senior priest stepped even closer to Tatsumi. At this distance, it was obvious he was over a head taller, and he took advantage of his height to look down on Tatsumi with serious, unflinching eyes.

Having no reason to back down, Tatsumi stood his ground, chest puffed out.

When the senior priest finally broke their silent standoff, it was to place both hands on Tatsumi's shoulders. "We, the men of the Saintess's Shadow Guard, shall fully support you! From now on, we stand behind both you and the Saintess!"



“Uh... what is that supposed to mean?” Tatsumi muttered without thinking, his face dumbfounded. Seeking help, he turned toward Barse, who was standing next to him. But the other man was looking back at him with an equally baffled expression.

If the stern-faced senior priest—likely the leader of the so-called “Saintess’s Shadow Guard”—had said something like “We will never accept you as the Saintess’s fiancé!” Tatsumi could have understood. After all, that was a common trope in manga. But to be told by Calsedonia’s followers that they would fully support him... Neither Tatsumi or Barse had ever imagined such a thing would happen.

To be honest, Tatsumi had been aware of various things being said about him behind his back ever since he and Calsedonia had gotten engaged. Some had even been blatant enough to badmouth him within earshot.

That said, it was natural for people to let their imaginations run wild. Calsedonia, who had stubbornly refused any proposal she received, from nobles and royalty alike, had suddenly become engaged to a foreign man.

Tatsumi had been prepared for backlash from the very beginning. Facing the people’s anger was nothing if it meant he’d be able to live the rest of his life with Calsedonia.

However... this situation was beyond unexpected.

While Tatsumi stood frozen, still at a loss as to how to react, the stern-faced senior priest began to speak once more.

“We, the Saintess’s Shadow Guard, have watched over our Lady Calsedonia since she was young, as our name suggests. Ever since you appeared, she seems genuinely happy and content. This is why we have decided to support you.”

The senior priest’s face softened, revealing a shockingly gentle expression. Taking in the sentiment in the man’s eyes, Tatsumi could tell that these people truly cared for Calsedonia, even if their way of going about it was a bit strange. If they were merely fans, they wouldn’t have noticed the shift in her demeanor after Tatsumi had arrived in this world.



It was only natural for a person to feel a complex tangle of emotions when their beloved gained a new lover. And for those who were unaware of Tatsumi and Calsedonia's relationship in their previous lives, there was no way to stave off the impression that Tatsumi had appeared out of nowhere.

Regardless, once you looked past the senior priest's stern appearance, it was clear he was a kind-hearted individual. Tatsumi had just opened his mouth to express his gratitude toward the man—who still hadn't released the firm grip he had on his shoulders—when Barse spoke up.

"So, you guys are, um... the Saintess's Shadow Guard, was it?" he asked, a puzzled look on his face.

"Indeed we are," the senior priest replied emphatically. All the other members nodded vigorously behind him.

"And what exactly has the Saintess's Shadow Guard done until now?" Barse asked. His tone was polite in deference to the senior priest's higher status, but his expression was incredulous.

"Why, we have been watching over Lady Calsedonia from the shadows," the senior priest immediately answered, voice full of pride. Whether he'd caught on to Barse's skepticism or not, I wasn't sure. "We have a storied history, tracing back to before our lady became known by the title of Saintess. Back when our ranks first formed, she was just the adopted daughter of His Highness Chrysoprase, who'd recognized her rare magical talents. I can remember how she looked all those years ago—she was the embodiment of purity and beauty..."

The senior priest didn't stop there; he began recounting tales of Calsedonia from her youth. It was intriguing (and a bit odd) to see a man of his age—which I assumed was somewhere between his late thirties and early forties—speak so passionately about Calsedonia when she'd been so young.

At that point, Tatsumi's assessment of the senior priest and his entourage shifted from "kind" to "somewhat concerning."

"With the guidance of His Holiness, Lady Calsedonia's magical talents blossomed, and she eventually came to be called the Saintess by those around her. But to us, such a moniker is far too modest! We believe she is the



embodiment of our god, Savaiv. Only the title of ‘Goddess’ would be grand enough to suit her!” the senior priest concluded, waving his clenched fist to drive the point home.

This is a good time to remind the reader that Tatsumi and Barse were currently standing in the corridor of the Savaiv Temple. Naturally, other priests were passing by, and they didn’t hide their annoyance at how the Saintess’s Shadow Guard were making a commotion in the middle of the corridor.

That said, there were also a number of passing priests who inexplicably turned away from wherever they were going and joined the Saintess’s Shadow Guard. Every time the senior priest raised a fist, the rest of his entourage echoed his sentiment with shouts of “Exactly!” and “That’s right!”

Tatsumi and Barse, on the other hand, were looking visibly disheartened. The thought of onlookers coming away with the conclusion that they were part of the Saintess’s Shadow Guard was understandably upsetting.

“As such, we have pledged to ensure Lady Calsedonia’s safety from the very moment of her adoption!” the senior priest continued, not at all done with his fervent speech. “Since that day, we have always kept an eye on her from the shadows, protecting her from harm! Whether she is diligently performing various duties within the temple, speaking the words of god to a gathering of believers within the chapel, or even entering the bathhouse or latrine, we are always by her side! Everyone is most vulnerable in the moments where they care for their bodily needs—it’s essential to vigilantly guard against those deplorable enough to attack at such times!”

“H-Hold on just a second!” Tatsumi couldn’t help but shout, concerned over where this particularly odd portion of the senior priest’s speech was going.

Unfortunately, the senior priest had gained too much momentum—he couldn’t stop now.

“And never fear! Though Lady Calsedonia has started living outside the temple with you recently, we have not abandoned our posts. We have merely shifted our hiding spots to outside your home, where we keep an eye out for any suspicious individuals who might snatch Lady Calsedonia’s underwear while



it's being hung out to dry. We never take our eyes off them until they're safely brought inside!"

"That's... definitely stalking, isn't it?!"

If they were in modern-day Japan, the senior priest's statements would have been more than enough to get the police involved, but terms like "sexual harassment" and "stalking" didn't exist in Calsedonia's world. Moreover... it didn't exactly seem like the Saintess's Shadow Guard—or their leader, at least—had bad intentions.

"Although that just makes it worse, doesn't it..." Tatsumi murmured under his breath.

Barse, looking both weary and amazed, turned to look at Tatsumi. "Wait, did you seriously not notice these guys hovering around until now?" he asked incredulously.

Tatsumi silently shook his head in response. If they'd been lurking a decent distance away from his and Calsedonia's house, it wasn't that shocking they'd failed to notice their presence. When they were alone together at home, there were plenty of times when they got so engrossed in one another that they wouldn't have noticed something amiss.

Tatsumi silently swore to himself to warn the rest of the ladies in the neighborhood when he returned home for the day.

The senior priest, meanwhile, had tilted his head in curiosity at Tatsumi's earlier words. "May I ask what exactly 'stalking' means?" he inquired.

"It's... a term that describes what people like you do," Tatsumi muttered under his breath.

Alas, the senior priest heard every word. He really was standing quite close.

"Ah, so in your homeland, those who watch over the objects of their admiration from the shadows are called stalkers, I take it? The word has a lovely ring to it. That's it—from now on, the Saintess's Shadow Guard shall be known as the Saintess's Stalkers! What do you think, gentlemen?!"

At the senior priest's call, the flock of men behind him unanimously showed their approval with a chorus of "So shall it be!"

*It's quite frightening what ignorance can lead a person to do*, Tatsumi mused. Indeed, in that moment, a group of stalkers who wore their label with pride—a phenomenon Tatsumi found utterly bizarre—was born.

"By the way, I have something I'd like to verify with you," the senior priest added. The members of the newly renamed Saintess's Stalkers watched with bated breath as their leader leaned his large frame in toward Tatsumi. "I've heard that, um... if someone becomes close to you... that they might also become close with your fiancée, Lady Calsedonia. Is this true?"

Thus, the true intentions of the Saintess's Stalkers were revealed. Their support for Tatsumi was nothing more than a way to get closer to his fiancée.

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After the Saintess's Stalkers changed their name, their activities dwindled rapidly. Sadly, this led to their dissolution, though no one knows quite why it occurred.

The only clue to the mystery were a number of words a former member was rumored to have said: "Even though that guy knew we were watching from the shadows, he'd still be so lovey-dovey with our Saintess, both at home and in the temple. Honestly, I couldn't stand to watch it anymore. Plus, watching those two gave me this sickeningly sweet feeling inside..."

It's said at some point while he spoke, the former member gulped down a cup of very strong tea in one go.





## Chapter 2: The New Year

**A**s time continued its relentless cycle, a new season arrived. The snow that had blanketed the entirety of the Kingdom of Largofiery slowly began to thaw, indicating the approaching commencement of a new year.

Unlike in Tatsumi and Calsedonia's old world, in Largofiery, no individual birthdays were celebrated. Instead, everyone from nobles to commoners celebrated their birthdays on the first day of the new year. Thus, Tatsumi would turn seventeen, while Calsedonia would turn twenty. It would also mark the passing of almost an entire year since Tatsumi had been summoned to this world from Japan by Calsedonia.

"There's a New Year's festival?" Tatsumi asked as he ambled beside Calsedonia through the capital's streets. Now that the roads were less burdened by snow, there was plenty of room for Calsedonia to take up her usual spot by his side.

"Yes," Calsedonia replied. "It's our country's way of celebrating the melting of the snow and of welcoming in a new year."

Unlike when Tatsumi had first arrived in this world, the people of the capital no longer gave him and Calsedonia astonished looks when they walked around together. Instead, now that they had all grown familiar with the pair's affectionate closeness, they squinted after them with warm smiles and perhaps a bit of amusement. Occasionally, they would even call out playful comments.

By now, Tatsumi had become well-accustomed to it all. His life was flourishing. Between fulfilling his duties at the temple and honing his skills as a warrior priest, Tatsumi would hunt magical beasts along with Jardock and Mirial. Sometimes this work led him farther from the capital than others, but as

he and his party had gotten used to working together, their financial resources had begun to grow rapidly. Recently, all three of them had even begun to wear armor that had been crafted from the beasts they'd slain, which served as a testament both to their enhanced abilities and the amount of funds they had on hand. However, it was the moments when he was free from his duties as a priest and a beast hunter, when he could spend time with his beloved fiancée, that were the most valuable to Tatsumi.

With the warmth of Calsedonia right beside him, Tatsumi made his way to the Elf's Repose Inn. It'd become a frequent haunt for the pair, since Jardock and Mirial often lodged there and Tatsumi was quite fond of Elle's cooking.

Elle was both the resident cook and owner of the Elf's Repose Inn. She'd actually lived in Japan for a long time before she'd come to this world, and while there she'd developed a liking for Japanese cuisine. This was what had led her to travel back and forth all over, chasing after a singular ambition: finding a way to recreate her favorite dishes using the ingredients available in this world.

Part of this endeavor likely stemmed from Elle's desire to keep her memories of her life in Japan close to her heart. The times she'd shared with her husband and close friends were irreplaceable treasures to her, and the flavors of Japanese cuisine were deeply connected to the memories she so cherished.

Amazingly, after countless attempts via trial and error, Elle had finally succeeded in recreating several Japanese recipes, and they'd become the inn's signature dishes. Her ambitions were far from being realized, however—from the moment Tatsumi and the others had met Elle, she'd been telling them she was fully ready to use her entire lengthy elven lifespan to perfectly recreate Japanese cuisine if that's what it took.

Naturally, Tatsumi had been delighted with Elle's Japanese-style dishes, and eating her cooking at the Elf's Repose Inn had become one of his favorite things to do. Calsedonia had actually asked Elle if she could have the recipe for some of them so she could cook them at home, but she'd been refused with a smile.

"The recipes for these dishes are a corporate secret only known to the Elf's Repose Inn. Even if it's you that's asking, Calsedonia, I cannot divulge them. So,



whenever you feel a craving for one of my dishes, please purchase them here and help support my business.”

After that, Calsedonia had no other choice but to relish the inn’s signature dishes without further inquiry. But of course, she wasn’t doing so alone—Tatsumi always came along as well. They often ventured over to indulge in the nostalgic flavors of Japanese cuisine—though Calsedonia had never tasted Japanese food, she’d become well acquainted with the aromas of various dishes while she’d been a cockatiel.

Sometimes, these dinner plans also expanded to include Barse. His partner, Nanu, actually worked at the Elf’s Repose Inn, which made for numerous joyous, happy occasions.

On this particular day, Tatsumi and Calsedonia walked up to the entrance of the inn and pushed open the door. Inside, the typical ambiance of lively chatter room was overlaid by an unfamiliar melody.

“Huh? What’s that sound?” Tatsumi asked.

“It sounds like it might be someone playing a lorraine,” Calsedonia speculated. The instrument in question was akin to a small harp, and was widely played throughout Largofiery. It was also a particular favorite of minstrels.

Calsedonia was proven right when they caught sight of an individual by the inn’s front desk, his hands skillfully plucking out a melody on the same harp-like instrument they’d just been speaking about. His gaze, intense and unwavering, was fixed on Elle as he sung. She seemed somewhat troubled by the attention, as she’d opted to ignore the performer.

“Ah, if it isn’t Tatsumi and Calsey. Come on over here,” Jardock called out, waving the pair over to the table she was sitting at. Mirial was there too, and she greeted them with a friendly wave.

As he settled into a chair, Tatsumi glanced back at the minstrel and remarked, “I don’t think I’ve seen that guy come around here before.”

There were many minstrels in the city of Levantis, of course. But of the few that were considered regulars at the Elf’s Repose Inn, Tatsumi was acquainted

with them all. That's why he found it a little odd that he didn't recognize the man singing away by the front desk.

"Seems like he's a minstrel who came to the capital early in anticipation of the New Year's festival," commented Mirial.

"But why is he staring so intently at Elle?" Tatsumi asked.

"He appears to be quite the womanizer," Mirial replied. "As soon as he entered the shop, he started dedicating love songs to every noteworthy woman he saw. He even approached me and said, 'My lady, allow me to sing a song in praise of your beauty.' Ugh, just remembering it makes my skin crawl."

"How come that guy didn't approach me at all?" Jardock chimed in with a smirk. "Really, how rude. As if I'm not a prime specimen of womanhood."

Jardock struck an exaggerated pose, sparking laughter among the rest of our group. Whether she was making jokes at her own expense to lighten the mood or she was being serious was unclear, but she'd gotten us all to smile regardless.

Tatsumi had heard before that in Largofiery, it was common for minstrels—regardless of gender—to sell sex along with their musical talents. And from the way the current minstrel was acting, Tatsumi couldn't help but wonder if he excelled in that particular line of work.

Curious, Tatsumi turned to look at the minstrel again. His hair, long enough to brush his shoulders, was a smoky-blond. He had a remarkably handsome face, with the color of his eyes standing out in particular—they shone bright as amethysts amidst his nonchalant demeanor.

Currently, he was fervently singing a song about love between a man and a woman. However, no one in the inn seemed to be listening to him at all. Not the beast hunters, not Elle or her employees, and not even Tatsumi and his friends. Instead, everyone just stared at the minstrel with cold eyes full of indifference.

It wasn't that the minstrel's singing was bad. In fact, his skills were considerable. With the combination of his deep baritone voice, handsome looks, and knack for dynamic storytelling, it wouldn't be a surprise at all if he



captivated every young woman in the room. The problem was, he had one singular flaw: the frivolous smile he was allowing to play across his lips.

All it took was one glance at the expression, and everyone in the room knew what the minstrel was seeking. It was so transparent that seemingly the entire audience at the Elf's Repose Inn had already picked up on it.

He was looking for a woman for the night.

On its own, that wouldn't be such a bad thing, but the expression on the minstrel's face gave off the impression that he wasn't looking for a partnership formed out of mutual desire. No, what he wanted was a conquest that would pump up his own ego.

The women in the inn could sense it a mile away. Not a one of them gave the guy so much as a sincere smile.

"So essentially, this guy's like a third-rate host who's always pushing for after-hours relationships with his clients, solely for his own benefit," Tatsumi murmured under his breath. The knowledge really dampened the mood.

With a lingering high note typical of the lorraine, the minstrel concluded his performance. The beast hunters in the shop, out of pity, tossed a few silver coins his way. Seeing the paltry number of them, the minstrel's face briefly contorted with dissatisfaction, but he quickly masked it with a forced smile and began to collect his earnings. He glanced back at Elle wistfully, but she'd seen right through his ulterior motives and completely ignored him.

Realizing he had no chance with Elle, the minstrel's gaze shifted around the room, sweeping over the patrons until it abruptly stopped on a specific person. His face lit up with excitement, and within a few moments he'd started weaving his way toward the table where Tatsumi and his companions were sitting.

"My apologies, how could I have not noticed such beautiful women entering the shop! This oversight will haunt me for life," professed the minstrel, kneeling down gracefully on one knee. "May I have the honor of knowing your name, fair lady? My own is Taland."

"Oh my, aren't you direct," Jardock chimed in with a grin. "My name's Jardock. Nice to meet you."

Taland completely ignored her, his focus solely on one member of our group. Unsurprisingly, he was fixated on Calsedonia.

Noticing what was going on, the beast hunters in the inn began to stir. Chatter filled the air as they murmured to one another, amused smiles on their faces. Yet, the minstrel, so intently focused on Calsedonia, remained oblivious to the sudden flurry of activity around him.





## Chapter 3: A Minstrel's Downfall

The minstrel's fate soon became the subject of lively speculation among the beast hunters, who immediately started placing bets with each other.

"I bet thirty silver coins that the minstrel gets knocked out by the Saintess's magic!" said one.

"Well then, I'll match those thirty silver coins and put them on him getting tossed out by Jardock!" said another.

"All right," said a third. "In that case, I'll boldly wager eighty silver coins on him being thoroughly scolded by the lady proprietor and thrown out of the inn!"

As they continued to whisper among themselves, the beast hunters fixed expectant gazes on the minstrel. Then, into the mix came Mirial.

"You all don't get it, do you?"

"Oh, hey, Mirial. You joining in?"

"Of course," she declared. "I came over here to place my bet. I'll wager a hundred silver coins that the minstrel ends up stripped bare by Tatsumi and tossed outside of the inn." Mirial, arms crossed, surveyed the beast hunters with a look of confidence.

"Hey, Mirial... are you sure about that bet? I can't imagine a mild-mannered guy like Tatsumi doing something like that."

"Yep, there's not a doubt in my mind. Seriously, you all just don't get it," Miral said with a smug smile. "When it comes down to it, the really scary one isn't Calsedonia—it's Tatsumi."



“I must decline,” Calsedonia replied to the minstrel, utterly disinterested. “I see no need to give you my name.”

“But, fair lady, our meeting here was undoubtedly brought about by the god of the evening moon, Gravavi!” said a smiling, undeterred Taland. “Let us surrender ourselves to his guidance together.”

“I serve the god Savaiv,” Calsedonia responded flatly. “And while I do not intend to disrespect Lord Gravavi’s teachings, I have no reason to follow the guidance of a god I do not worship.”

Gravavi, the god of the evening moon, was worshipped as a guardian deity of the night. Consequently, the majority of his followers were minstrels and courtesans, which had led to him being known as a deity that facilitated fleeting, one-night romances.

The fact that Taland had invoked Gravavi’s name in such a manner was a clear attempt to entice Calsedonia into such an arrangement. Fully aware of his intentions, she’d naturally declined.

The smile briefly fell off Taland’s face at Calsedonia’s response, revealing a look of deep displeasure. Moments later it was gone, masked once again.

But Taland wasn’t done—he reached out suddenly, rudely grasping at Calsedonia’s delicate hand. However, just before his fingers touched her skin, a muscular ash-brown arm smoothly slid in from the side.

“Oh my. You’re really quite brazen, aren’t you? Although, I don’t dislike someone who’s proactive...” Jardock sent the minstrel a wink, one of her four eyes closing.

Taland, momentarily baffled, abruptly realized he’d grabbed hold of the wrong person. As if he’d touched something scalding, he hastily retracted his hand.

“You’ve been quite rude from the very beginning,” the minstrel hissed at Jardock. “This place is where I and this beautiful lady have had a fated meeting—those unrelated should find somewhere else to go!”

“Hmm, but shouldn’t you be the one going elsewhere?” Jardock asked with a grin. “You wouldn’t want to embarrass yourself in public, would you? The sooner you leave, the bigger the favor you’re doing yourself.”

Taland turned back to Calsedonia once more, evidently having decided to ignore Jardock from here on out. “Of all the beauties I’ve encountered, you are by far the most exquisite,” he breathed. “My pitiful self fell under your spell the moment I first laid eyes on you. Please, allow me to perform a song praising your beauty.”

“No, thank you.”

Taland chuckled, beginning to lightly strum his lorraine. “Please, don’t be so reserved. Even the Saintess of Savaiv temple, famously the most beautiful woman in the capital, would fade into obscurity before your radiant beauty.”

Clearly, the minstrel was blissfully unaware that the very woman he’d just compared Calsedonia to was herself. The beast hunters sitting nearby struggled to contain their laughter at the irony of his statement.

By this point, everyone was eager to see how the situation would unfold. The beast hunters who had placed their bets were particularly keen, their eyes glued to Tatsumi’s table.

Unexpectedly, Tatsumi stood up. The beast hunters, having anticipated that either Calsedonia, Jardock, or Elle would be the ones to step in, were taken aback.

“Chiko, I’m going to head home for a bit,” Tatsumi told Calsedonia. “I’ll be back soon, so please wait here for me.”

“Yes, Master. Please take care.”

Calsedonia also rose, bowing deeply to Tatsumi. She didn’t ask why he was leaving; she trusted Tatsumi enough to know that if he’d decided to go in the middle of this situation, he had his reasons.

Moreover, Tatsumi felt no apprehension about leaving Calsedonia alone in the inn. He had the utmost faith in her and knew she was in good company with Jardock, Mirial, Elle, and all the other familiar faces inside the inn. They would undoubtedly step in if it grew necessary.



With a reassuring smile to Calsedonia, Tatsumi quickly exited the inn. Calsedonia, after watching him leave, sat back down as if nothing had occurred, completely ignoring the minstrel by her side.

The minstrel, unable to comprehend the reasoning behind Tatsumi's sudden departure, looked completely at a loss. The beast hunters scattered around the room were similarly puzzled, their heads tilting in confusion as they pondered why Tatsumi would leave Calsedonia behind and go home.

"Miss Innkeeper, may I place an order for food?" Calsedonia asked abruptly.

"Sure, of course!" Elle replied. "What would you like?"

"Could we have two servings of kishimen noodles, please? Master will be back shortly."

"Got it, two servings of kishimen noodles coming up!"

With that cheerful response, Elle disappeared into the kitchen behind the counter.

"Oh, you two are having kishimen again?" Jardock asked. "You guys are obsessed with the stuff, huh?"

"Yes, Master also quite enjoys Elle's kishimen. He mentioned wanting to eat some on our way here today. But of course, all of Elle's dishes are delicious."

Finally regaining his composure, Taland frantically interrupted Calsedonia and Jardock's cheery conversation. "Oh! So, your name is Calsedonia? What a marvelous name indeed. It befits your beauty, I must say."

As he spoke, Taland softly played his lorraine, letting the music embellish his words. His polished appearance, refined demeanor, and the charm woven through his music might have easily swayed an ordinary tavern maid, but unfortunately for him, such tactics were ineffective against Calsedonia. She continued to ignore him completely, instead focusing on her conversation with Jardock.

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It wasn't long before Tatsumi announced his return to the inn with a shouted "I'm back !"

Taland was the only one surprised by his quick reappearance—the beast hunters present in the inn were entirely unfazed. They were already familiar with Tatsumi's magical abilities, so the idea of him making a quick round trip between the inn and his home wasn't strange to them at all. However, today, they watched Tatsumi with curious eyes, wondering what he'd gone home to retrieve.

Tatsumi was holding the object in question in his hands. It was an unfamiliar sight for the patrons of the inn, and they all intently observed its size and shape.

"What is that thing, Tatsumi?" Jardock asked, intrigued. "Won't you enlighten your sis here?"

"It's an instrument from my homeland," Tatsumi pronounced with a hint of pride. "It's called a guitar."

Indeed, the reason Tatsumi had decided to return home had been to retrieve the acoustic guitar, which his father had left him as a keepsake. It'd been one of the few things that had gotten summoned to this world with him.

"Oh, a guitar, huh?" Jardock murmured. "And what does it sound like?"

"I haven't played it much recently, so it might be a bit out of tune..."

Tatsumi cautiously plucked the guitar's strings, testing its sound. Soft, warm tones quickly filled the Elf's Repose Inn, engulfing all the patrons in a unique musical experience. The instruments favored in Largofiery, such as the lorraine, typically produced higher, sharper tones, so the deep and mellow sounds of the acoustic guitar were likely refreshingly new to the ears of the local populace.

"Hey, Chiko, do you remember this song?" Tatsumi asked, beginning to play a melody that he and Calsedonia had often listened to back in Japan.

"Yes, of course, I do," she replied, smiling softly back at him. She began to sing along to the upbeat, catchy song, her high vocals weaving together with the guitar's low notes until they harmonized into a beautiful melody.

The tunes sung by minstrels were mostly more narration than song, with performers reciting folklore or other dramatic tales alongside the accompaniment of an instrument, so the abrupt introduction of Japanese music initially left the people inside the Elf's Repose Inn puzzled.

Their confusion was fleeting. The upbeat rhythm seemed to resonate with the beast hunters, who quickly began clapping along and stamping their feet to the melody. Then, to everyone's surprise, a new voice joined in—it was Elle's. Having lived in Japan, she too was familiar with the song Tatsumi was playing.

The sound of Tatsumi's guitar melded with Calsedonia and Elle's voices, majorly elevating their performance. The pair of women, as if moved by the same impulse, joined hands and began an improvised dance on the spot. As they spun and danced in harmony with the melody, their steps were so synchronized it was hard to believe they were improvised.





The dance performed by the two beauties lacked the elegance of courtly arrangements, but it was imbued with the cheerfulness and agility beloved by the common folk. It was only natural, then, that the excitement in the room grew, and people's spirits lifted.

The lyrics, sung in Japanese, were incomprehensible to the audience, and the melody was unfamiliar. Yet all within the Elf's Repose Inn were utterly captivated by Tatsumi's music. Patrons and employees alike, including Jardock and Mirial, began to clap their hands and stamp their feet in unison to the beat.

When Tatsumi's performance finally came to an end, a momentary silence enveloped the inn. It was quickly shattered, however, by a resounding cheer that echoed through the establishment.

The beast hunters and other customers called out praise of the music with smiling faces. Murmurs of "That instrument, that song... I've never heard anything like it before..." and "Wh-What was that?" flooded the room.

Amid the fervor, Taland was left bewildered. To him, the performance and song had been nothing short of alien, yet it was clear that the novel music had been wholeheartedly embraced by the audience. However, Taland was not one to be easily discouraged.

"Aha ha ha. What a splendid performance! Even I, a professional minstrel, must admit you are a better singer than I. You are not only beautiful to the eye—your voice is also lovely beyond compare." Once again kneeling beside Calsedonia, Taland placed a hand over his heart and bowed gracefully. "How about it? Would you care to teach me? I will pay, of course. Let us rent a room at this inn. We can talk in private, just the two of us..."

It seemed he hadn't given up on Calsedonia just yet. The beast hunters in the inn could only admire his persistence—his passion for the opposite sex was commendable in its own right.

Tatsumi stood up again. "Can't you give it a rest?" he asked calmly, tamping down his growing frustration. "Chiko has no interest in associating with you. You understand that much, don't you?"

“Good sir, while your performance was commendable, and the sound of that peculiar instrument wasn’t half bad, this matter is between the beautiful lady before me and myself. I don’t care who you are or where you’re from—just back off. Even if you, too, have developed feelings for this exquisite creature, a man of such ordinary appearance as yourself could hardly be a match for her.”

Taland flipped his hair in a transparent attempt to flaunt his own looks. Indeed, by any standard, Tatsumi’s appearance was ordinary, while Taland could certainly be classified as handsome. This fact was irrelevant to Calsedonia, however. To her, Tatsumi was the most wonderful man in the world.

By this point, Taland had considerably pissed Tatsumi off with his attempts to woo Calsedonia. That he was oblivious she was taken was no excuse.

“Is it about time? I wonder...” murmured Mirial, who had been observing the exchange between Tatsumi and the minstrel closely. Silently, she decided that this was her moment, and she began to move slowly toward the inn’s entrance.

Upon reaching the door that separated inside from the outside, Mirial gently tugged it open. The situation was unfolding just as she had anticipated, suggesting that Tatsumi’s next move was imminent.

“All right, I’ve set everything up for you, Tatsumi,” Mirial whispered, a smile spreading across her face. Confident in the knowledge that her actions would soon bear fruit, she turned her eyes back to the ongoing confrontation.

“To all the ladies in this establishment, I apologize in advance,” Tatsumi said, lightly touching Taland.

For those intently watching their exchange, Taland’s figure seemed to blur for a moment. When it came back into focus, the minstrel was standing there completely naked, all his clothes having fallen away.

“Huh...?” Unable to comprehend what happened to him, Taland was utterly bewildered. “Wh-Wh-What happened?!”

The women, meanwhile, screamed in unison and covered their faces with their hands.

Before Taland could react, Tatsumi touched him again. This time, Taland completely vanished from inside the inn and reappeared outside—right in the



middle of the busy street in front of the Elf's Repose Inn. His clothes were still markedly absent.

Naturally, passersby began to scream at the sight of a naked man suddenly appearing before them. Completely at a loss as to how to handle his predicament, Taland panicked, not even thinking to cover himself. But before he could completely lose it, something heavy landed on him from above—it was all his clothes, along with his instrument.

Staring blankly back at the entrance of the Elf's Repose Inn, Taland saw several beast hunters glaring sharply at him.

"We've got a message from the innkeeper: Don't enter the Elf's Repose Inn ever again. You're banned."

One of the men nodded. "If you ignore the innkeeper's words and come back, know that we won't stay silent!"

"Take your gear and your clothes and get lost!"

The beast hunters who'd thrown Taland his clothes were regulars at the inn. Several particularly devout admirers of Elle were among them. Unsurprisingly, the men harbored intense anger toward Taland in their hearts, just like Tatsumi. Watching Taland persistently bother Elle, the object of their admiration, had pushed them right to the edge. Had Tatsumi and his companions arrived at the inn even a bit later, it would have been these hunters, not Tatsumi, who would have kicked Taland out.

Overwhelmed by Tatsumi's enigmatic magic and intimidated by the formidable amount of anger boiling off the beast hunters, Taland finally lost it. He scrambled to scoop up his clothes and instrument, then fled down the street with a scream, still stark naked.

With a loud bang, the inn's door closed, and roaring laughter echoed inside.

"Well done, Tatsumi!"

"Yeah, I feel a lot better now! That minstrel was getting too bold!"

"Still, you're quite ruthless, humiliating him the way you did with your own musical talent before kicking him out!"

“Indeed. From now on, I swear never to cross you.”

“Ha ha ha, me too. Being stripped naked in public is a no-go!”

“But stripping a woman, that’s always welcome!”

The beast hunters all cackled, nudging Tatsumi with their elbows.

Sporting a slightly troubled smile amid the rough celebration, Tatsumi glanced towards the entrance, where Mirial was giving him a thumbs-up with a broad smile. Returning the gesture, he then looked at Elle.

“Thank you, Elle. And I apologize for any unpleasantness.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it,” Elle replied, playfully sticking out her tongue. “That minstrel was troubling me too. Plus, the song brought back memories, so I couldn’t help but join in. It was a favorite karaoke choice for me and my friends back when I lived in Japan.”

“Hey, Tatsumi!” one of the beast hunters called out. “Can you play something else? If you’ve got more, let’s hear another one!”

“That song... was it from your homeland? It had a great vibe! I really liked it!”

Tatsumi, Calsedonia, and Elle conceded to the multitude of requests, performing several more Japanese songs. The rest of the evening at the Elf’s Repose Inn was filled with cheerful music and lively applause.

“Such a foolish man,” Jardock muttered amid the boisterous festivities. “I advised him to leave before he embarrassed himself further for a reason.”

Just then, a very pleased Mirial returned to the table.

“What’s got you looking so happy?” Jardock asked.

Mirial dropped a bag full of silver coins onto the table with a thud. “Thanks to Tatsumi, I made a huge profit!”

“That doesn’t seem quite fair...”

“Oh, the bet was their idea to begin with. I just took advantage of their cluelessness, you know?”





Mirial knew quite well what sort of fate befell those who dared to mess with Calsedonia. Once, Calsedonia had traveled with Tatsumi, Jardock, and Mirial to a distant hunting ground to hunt magical beasts, and they'd ended up staying at an inn in a wayside town. There'd been a tavern attached to it, and while the four of them had been visiting it, a drunken man had touched Calsedonia's behind.

This was a relatively common scene in more rural taverns. Drunken patrons were always groping serving girls or other female customers. In a stark contrast to the way Tatsumi's previous world had viewed such sexual harassment, in this world, adeptly handling those types of advances was just considered a necessary skill for a waitress.

That time, the man had made the mistake of choosing the wrong person to harass. In a silent rage, Tatsumi had stripped the man naked on the spot and thrown him out of the tavern, much like he had today. And just like Taland, the man had been bewildered by his sudden nakedness in a very public area and eventually fled the scene with a pitiful scream. All the tavern patrons had been on their best behavior after that, especially since they weren't sure who exactly had punished the man so thoroughly.

"Since I kept quiet about that incident, you're gonna pay me some hush money, right?" Jardock asked, teasing Mirial.

"Of course," she replied good-naturedly, shaking her bag of silver coins until it let out a pleasing jingle. "Order whatever you like—it's on me."

Jardock, smiling wryly at Mirial's antics, thought back to the minstrel from earlier. "That guy seemed quite experienced at wooing women, but... he was rather small, wasn't he? I wonder if he can really satisfy a woman if that's all he's got to work with."

Remembering the stripped minstrel, Jardock chuckled mischievously. What exactly was small about him was best left unclarified, for the sake of whatever dignity he had left.

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It was late into the night when Tatsumi and Calsedonia finally returned home. Uttering the password to unlock their front door, they entered the house together.

It had been a truly enjoyable day. Despite the unpleasant presence of the presumptuous minstrel, the rest of the evening had been spent enjoying drinks and delicious food with familiar faces, Elle, Jardock, and Mirial among them.

Faced with the dark interior of the room before him, Tatsumi turned around to speak to Calsedonia.

“Chiko, could you light the—”

His words were cut short as something soft gently sealed his lips, and a subtle, tantalizing fragrance filled his nose. The scent was familiar to Tatsumi—it belonged to a certain precious woman whom he’d come to know very well.

As the pressure on his lips lifted, Tatsumi could sense, even in the darkness, how Calsedonia’s beautiful ruby eyes lingered on him.

“Master... Thank you for protecting me today.”

“No, I... I didn’t really do mu—,” Tatsumi started to say, but his lips were once again softly silenced by the same gentle touch as before. For a moment, in the dark, only their faint breathing could be heard.

“It’s okay. I’m very happy that you did all that for me.”

Tatsumi’s eyes, now accustomed to the dark, could make out the glowingly happy look on Calsedonia’s face.

“You’re truly a wonderful person, Master,” she murmured, a graceful smile stretching across her lips. She embraced Tatsumi tightly, nestling her cheek against his chest in a soothing gesture of affection.



## Chapter 4: Careful Planning and Scheming

In a room adorned with glittering decorations, three individuals had gathered around a large circular table to engage in casual conversation while enjoying tea and confections.

Every piece of furniture in the space was clearly expensive, crafted by top artisans who had poured time and skill into their creations. In addition, these pieces had been meticulously arranged to ensure the elegance of the room remained unblemished.

There was a quiet tap on the room's only door. "His Eminence, Giuseppe Chrysopraxe, High Priest of the Savaiv Temple, has arrived," a voice announced.

After a brief pause, the door slowly opened to reveal the man in question. "Ah, my apologies for being late," Giuseppe said with a chuckle, stepping into the room without any sign of embarrassment. Clad in the opulent vestments only the High Priest was permitted to wear, he crossed the room with authority, then took a seat without waiting for an invitation.

"You're late," said the man seated next to Giuseppe, who was clad in clothing of similar luxuriousness. He gave the High Priest a sideways glance, then added, "Have you finally become senile?"

"Hmph, as if," Giuseppe retorted with a snort. "I'm still far too busy for that."

"Oh, is that so?" asked an elderly woman across from Giuseppe, also wearing an ornate robe. "From what I've heard, you've recently taken a particular interest in a young man, and you've been spending quite a bit of time alone with him in your quarters. Alas, to think that the High Priest of the marriage deity would turn to the path of homosexuality..." She clasped her hands and muttered a prayer under her breath. "It's truly lamentable."

“Who are you calling a homosexual? I have a proper wife, children, and even grandchildren,” Giuseppe replied calmly, dismissing the insinuations with a wave of his hand. “It’s true I’ve taken a special interest in a young man lately, but that’s all there is to it.”

The conversation prompted an image of the young man who was Giuseppe’s disciple to surface in the High Priest’s mind. He seemed to be at the forefront of the minds of the other three individuals as well, for the conversation shifted to focus entirely on him.

“Hey, Old Man Giuseppe,” burst out the final man at the table, who was noticeably younger than the rest of them. “That guy you’re taking under your wing—are the rumors true about him? I heard he’s the second person ever to be able to use Heaven magic.”

“Yes, without a doubt,” Giuseppe confirmed, his face brightening with pride as if he were boasting about his own grandson. “I’ve seen brilliant golden magic emanating from his body with my very own eyes. Moreover, he has recently become quite adept at using Heaven magic, including instantaneous teleportation.”

The first man who’d spoken snorted. “Why must all the rare talents flock to *your* temple? To have both the Saintess and a Heaven mage as your disciples... Damn, I’m jealous!”

The elderly woman just shrugged her shoulders dismissively. “Oh dear, do you see that look in his eye? Let’s hope he was telling the truth and hasn’t actually taken to the path of male affection...”

The interest of the second, much younger, man had been thoroughly peaked. “Whoa, really?” he exclaimed, eyes sparkling with excitement. “Why don’t you hand that guy over to my temple, Gramps? Leave him to me, and I’ll make him the strongest warrior in the country. Heck, I could even make him my son-in-law. Imagine that—having a Heaven mage as a son-in-law. Man, I’m so fired up!”

“Why should I send him to another temple?” Giuseppe scoffed, having no intentions of agreeing to such an offer. “Besides, your daughter is only ten years



old, and he's already promised to my granddaughter. I stood as witness to their formal engagement, sworn before Lord Savaiv."

This effectively closed the discussion on Giuseppe's protégé's future affiliations and marital arrangements.

"Now, shall we move on to the main topic?" Giuseppe proposed with a chuckle as he scanned the room, his demeanor as joyful as if he were a child showing off a new toy. "There's more to speak about during our meeting today than my granddaughter's fiancé."

"You're the one who started it," the first man, High Priest Glugnard Armart of the Dragabe Temple, retorted with a sullen expression.

"Yes, let's get to the main topic," agreed the elderly woman, High Priestess Myarina Kiscalt of Gravavi Temple. "I am certainly not here to waste time."

The young man, High Priest Bugarank Ishkan of Goraiba Temple, clicked his tongue. "I knew you wouldn't easily part with him," he muttered. "But I'd still really like to meet this so-called Heaven mage in person!"

Ignoring Glugnard and Bugarank's grumbling, Giuseppe nodded at Myarina. "Let's start by discussing the upcoming New Year's Festival. We need to decide what each temple will host and what roles we will play."

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A while back, during one of Tatsumi's regular meetings with Giuseppe to receive guidance about magic and learn the teachings of the temple and this world, the conversation had taken an intriguing turn.

"Wait, so you'll be meeting with all the high priests of the four main temples in person?" Tatsumi asked, a bit surprised at the magnitude of such a gathering.

"Yes," Giuseppe confirmed, stroking his impressive white beard cheerfully as he responded to Tatsumi's query. "Normally, there's no need for me to personally travel to the other temples, but it's tradition for the High Priests to meet once a year to discuss the New Year's Festival."

Apparently, this annual gathering was essential to keep the peace in Largofiery, as it ensured harmony and cooperation between the different divine factions of the kingdom. Beyond that, it was also important to keep the peace during the festival period. It was a bustling time of the year where the number of people in the capital often increased, and crimes targeting festivalgoers were rampant. The constant revelry also frequently led to overindulgence, resulting in public disturbances and brawls fueled by alcohol. As such, part of the meeting between the high priests was to discuss how best to collaborate with the national guard each year to maintain order.

“Temple warriors are of course part of the peacekeeping force,” Giuseppe told Tatsumi, “so you’ll be expected to help out as well.”

Tatsumi gave him a solemn nod, understanding the weighty responsibility despite feeling a slight bit of disappointment that he’d have to work during the festival.

“Additionally, the four temples are responsible for tending to those who injure themselves or suddenly take ill during the festivities. That won’t directly involve you, but given Calsedonia’s healing prowess, she’ll likely be assigned to help with medical duties.”

As the conversation continued, the topic shifted to the specific events each temple was planning to host.

“If each temple organizes different activities, what kind of events are we talking about?” Tatsumi inquired, curious.

“Every year, Goraiba Temple hosts a tournament open to the common folk,” Giuseppe elaborated. “Unlike the noble’s contests with swords and mounted spears, the participant’s fight bare-handed. It’s quite the event; it draws large crowds every year.”

Apparently, the style of fighting utilized in the tournament was unique to Largofiery, and was called gish. It was somewhat akin to wrestling, though aggressive tactics like punching and kicking were allowed. Competitors would grapple with one another in a standing position, with the ultimate goal of pinning their opponent’s back to the ground, which made for quite an intense spectacle.

“As far as the Gravavi Temple, they typically host a treasure hunt in the woods on the outskirts of the capital. Nonlethal traps are set up throughout the area, and participants must navigate through them to find treasures. Whatever they find, they can keep.”

Giuseppe went on to explain that most of the treasures weren't particularly valuable—they were comparable to the prizes you'd find in a raffle at a small-town gift shop—but there was always one high-ticket item concealed among them, which helped attract a large number of participants each year.

That didn't mean finding the more valuable items was easy—the forest was expansive, and the best prizes were hidden with great care. In fact, only a handful of participants had ever successfully located the top prize.

Even with temple warriors stationed throughout the forest for security, the hunt was still dangerous given its setting in the wilderness. Participants had occasionally even encountered dangerous beasts, resulting in injuries and, very rarely, fatalities. Still, despite these risks, the event consistently attracted many participants each year.

“The Dragabe Temple, meanwhile, doesn't hold competitive events. Instead, they offer food and drink for all without cost every year. Not all city residents are wealthy, so this is very well-received by the common folk.”

Indeed, I'd heard that in the capital and its surrounding areas, not everyone lived comfortably. Some eked out their existence day by day, constantly struggling to make ends meet. For such individuals, the free sustenance offered by the Dragabe Temple during the festival was a welcome respite.

“And what about the Temple of Savaiv? What event do we host?” Tatsumi asked, curious about the activities planned by Giuseppe's own temple.

“At our temple, I personally bestow a divine blessing on the infants born during the year in a ceremony. Of course, that's planned for this year too, but there's something else I'm thinking of doing,” Giuseppe said, his smile widening slyly. “And for that, I will absolutely need your help.”

*Ah, he's up to something. And likely nothing too benign,* Tatsumi immediately thought. It made him realize how well he'd gotten to know the older man. *I also doubt he'll give me the ability to refuse.*

This impression was only confirmed as he listened to Giuseppe's plan. As the High Priest's grin grew wider and wider, Tatsumi's expression went from confused to shocked. By the end of the conversation, he was blushing deeply for reasons yet unknown.

"Wait, Giuseppe! Do we really have to go through with such a thing?" Tatsumi asked, his tone a mix of apprehension and disbelief.

"Yes, I would prefer if you could handle it. In the past, our temple's festivities have been quite understated compared to the other three temples. I've never been satisfied with that; I've always wanted to do something more flamboyant. But the conservative priests fuss over tradition and doctrine. As the High Priest, I couldn't just overturn our temple's teachings and traditions myself, so I've been holding back. But now..." Giuseppe's voice trailed off as he gazed into the distance, then turned back to Tatsumi with a clear and cheerful smile. "This year, we have you. With you here, we can put on a grand event without disrupting the temple's traditions or doctrines."

"But if it's that plan..." Tatsumi hesitated, searching for an out. "Surely someone else could—"

"No, it needs to be someone well-known. That's what makes an event grand. Fortunately, you and Calsedonia are quite famous now, and are essentially family to me. If we lean on that fact, even the stodgy temple elders will have to accept it." Giuseppe bowed deeply to Tatsumi. "If this event is a success, it could become a new tradition in our temple. Please, I'm counting on you."

Receiving such an earnest request from Giuseppe, High Priest of the Savaiv Temple and the closest thing he had to a benefactor, Tatsumi felt he couldn't refuse. Still, he didn't immediately agree. He hemmed and hawed, letting his gaze wander around the room. But he knew inside that he had no choice but to accept Giuseppe's request, and that doing so would require a significant commitment on his part.

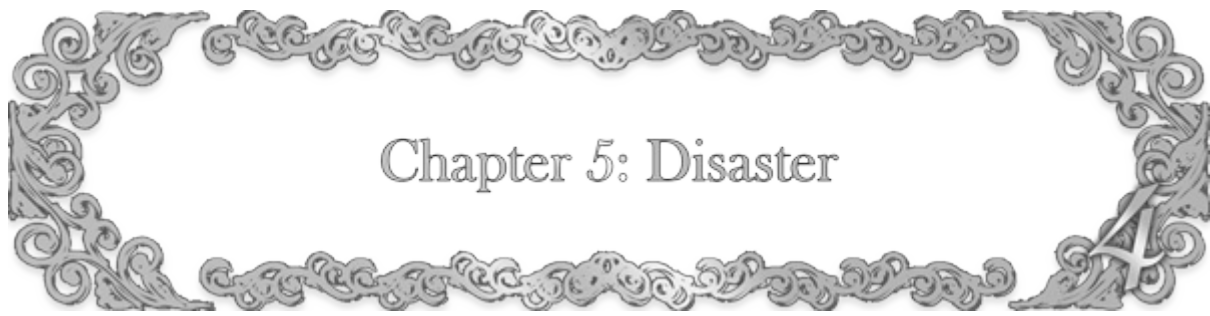
"All right, I understand... So, what about the preparations on her side?" Tatsumi managed to ask, his face flushed red.

"You needn't worry about that, my boy. We've been quietly handling everything. I believe in your world, you'd call such an occasion a surprise?"



Giuseppe's face lit up with childlike anticipation. "Hmm, yes, I can't wait for the festival to arrive."

Thus, trapped under the weight of an inescapable responsibility, Tatsumi agreed to partake in Giuseppe's ambitious plans, setting the stage for what was sure to be a memorable event at the festival.



## Chapter 5: Disaster

**O**ne day, Calsedonia suddenly found herself summoned by Elysia Quart, the former duchess of Quart. Fearing that she might have fallen ill again, Calsedonia hurriedly rushed over to see her. But when she got there...

“Lady Calsedonia, I actually have a favor to ask of you. Would you mind entertaining my request...?”

Although she was relieved that Lady Elysia was healthy, Calsedonia couldn’t help but feel a bit wary about this so-called favor. Past requests had seldom been pleasant for her.

In the past, Lady Elysia had tried to match her up with some of her male relatives, or suggested arranging marriage meetings with the sons of her acquaintances. She’d only done so out of concern, as Calsedonia had been nearing the latter half of what was considered marriageable age, but Calsedonia had found it bothersome nonetheless. Thankfully, since meeting Tatsumi, Lady Elysia had ceased such activities.

*It’s highly unlikely this is about another marriage proposal then,* a puzzled Calsedonia thought as she waited for Lady Elysia to continue.

“You see, a daughter of an acquaintance of mine is supposed to attend a soirée and she had a new dress made... but she fell ill just before the final fitting,” Lady Elysia explained with a hand to her cheek, releasing a worried sigh. “She is expected to recover in time for the soirée, but it seems she won’t make it for the dress fitting. So...” Lady Elysia gave Calsedonia a meaningful look.

“I understand. You want me to heal her illness, right?” Calsedonia responded promptly.

“Oh, no, that’s not it. I’d like you to stand in for her fitting,” Lady Elysia clarified.

“Me? Do the fitting?” Calsedonia blinked several times in surprise.

“Yes, you and the young lady have similar builds, so I thought that might be a good idea.”

“But wouldn’t it be better if I just used magic to heal her instead of acting as a substitute?” Calsedonia suggested, still trying to find a more practical solution.

“That’s true, but the seamstresses are already on their way here. They are quite busy and have made special arrangements to come to this house, so could you please do the fitting for us?”

Lady Elysia covered her mouth with her fan, laughing in a somewhat forced manner. While she was adept at the intricate games of noble intrigue, it seemed that telling lies for the sake of others wasn’t exactly her strong suit.

Feeling somewhat unconvinced but compelled to say yes since it was Lady Elysia asking, Calsedonia reluctantly nodded her agreement, though her face showed her internal struggle.

“Then could we start right away?” Lady Elysia asked.

“Now? Right this moment?” Calsedonia exclaimed, surprised.

Ignoring Calsedonia’s astonishment, Lady Elysia clapped her hands a few times. At her signal, there came a knock at the door, followed by several women carrying fabrics and sewing tools bustling into the room.

The women, who appeared to be the seamstresses Lady Elysia had mentioned, skillfully began to remove Calsedonia’s clothes with practiced hands. In moments, she was in her undergarments, various fabrics of different types and colors being held up against her.

“Considering Lady Calsedonia’s hair color, perhaps accessories in subdued shades rather than flashy ones would be more flattering?” Lady Elysia suggested.



“Yes, that would indeed highlight the beauty of Lady Calsedonia’s hair,” agreed one of the seamstresses.

As the women efficiently proceeded with their work, Calsedonia felt a twinge of confusion. “Um... Wouldn’t it be pointless to match the dress with my hair color?”

“Oh, it’ll be fine,” one of the seamstresses reassured her. “The young lady you’re assisting has hair of a similar shade.”

“Really?” Calsedonia murmured, somewhat surprised. Her hair color was rather rare in this country. While not as uncommon as Tatsumi’s black hair, blonde, let alone platinum blonde hair was still infrequently seen.

Despite her reservations, Calsedonia soon found herself swept along as the seamstresses worked at a breakneck pace. In the blink of an eye, they’d chosen fabric, selected accessories, and determined the fine details of what the dress would look like. They also measured her in various places, making Calsedonia feel like the dress was being tailored especially for her.

“Lady Calsedonia’s skin is truly smooth and beautiful. I’m quite envious,” one seamstress remarked.

“Oh, me too! She’s so pale and... What are those?”

One of the seamstresses had noticed several darkened marks—bruises, it looked like—on Calsedonia’s fair skin, particularly around the fuller curves of her chest. Realizing what those marks might imply, the seamstress’s face turned bright red.

“I’m terribly sorry!” she exclaimed.

After that, all the seamstresses blushed and looked away, deliberately trying to avoid staring at the bruises again as they focused on their work. Still, they couldn’t help stealing the occasional glance. Calsedonia, for her part, was as red as the seamstresses, her gaze darting around in embarrassment.

“Oh my. It seems you and Tatsumi are getting along quite well,” Lady Elysia observed, smiling mischievously as she watched Calsedonia.



Embarrassed by Elysia's teasing, Calsedonia's face turned even redder. Yet, despite the embarrassment, a genuinely happy and content smile was unmistakably playing across her face. Lady Elysia and the seamstresses all noticed.

As Calsedonia was basking in her blissful embarrassment, a sudden knock on the door interrupted the moment.

"My lady, Senior Priest Yamagata from the Temple of Savaiv has arrived," announced a servant.

"Oh, Tatsumi is here?" Elysia exclaimed. "Did he happen to say why?"

"It seems to be an urgent matter," the servant replied. "He wishes to meet with Priestess Chrysopraxe immediately. How would you like me to proceed?"

"What about Calsedonia's fitting?" Lady Elysia asked, turning to the seamstresses.

"It's all completed," one responded respectfully, bowing her head.

Calsedonia, meanwhile, was hurriedly donning her priestly garments. Although she'd looked weary just moments before, her fatigue seemed to vanish as she prepared to meet Tatsumi. Her face was alight with joy.

*To think that despite living together on a regular basis, the thought of seeing Tatsumi still brings her such happiness,* Lady Elysia thought with a hint of amusement as she instructed the servant to let Tatsumi into the room.

After a short wait, Tatsumi, dressed in his priestly attire, appeared. The moment Calsedonia saw him, her face brightened like a blooming flower, but upon noticing his serious demeanor, her expression quickly became more solemn.

"I apologize for barging in, Lady Elysia," Tatsumi said in greeting.

"It's quite all right. After all, it's been a while since we last saw each other."

"Yes, I'm sorry for not visiting sooner. But unfortunately, I'm here on an urgent matter..." Tatsumi turned to Calsedonia with a serious look. "Chiko. It seems there's been an accident at the palace. There are quite a few injuries, and High Priest Giuseppe has ordered us to head to the scene immediately."

Upon hearing about the accident, shock covered Calsedonia's face, but she quickly composed herself and nodded to Tatsumi, acknowledging the urgency of the situation. "Lady Elysia, I apologize, but..."

"It's all right; I've heard of such things happening before," Lady Elysia replied. "Though it seems to be a particularly significant accident this time."

Presumably, she was referring to the relatively frequent injuries that occurred during the regular training sessions held at the palace for the knights and soldiers. While the palace always had physicians on staff, they weren't necessarily skilled in healing magic. Therefore, a number of clerics were dispatched to the palace to heal those in need on any given day. Today was no exception, and a healer from another temple should have already been there. The need to mobilize additional healers suggested the severity of the accident.

"I'll arrange for a carriage right away," Lady Elysia finished. "If you'll just wait a moment..."

"No, it will be faster if I take Chiko and teleport," Tatsumi interjected.

After bowing respectfully to Lady Elysia, Tatsumi wrapped his arms around Calsedonia. Then, in the blink of an eye, the two of them vanished.

Having never seen someone teleport before, Lady Elysia and the seamstresses looked around in astonishment, their eyes wide. They caught sight of the pair of lovers floating in the distance outside the window, only for them to vanish once again.

"So that's Tatsumi's teleportation magic... Indeed, it appears to be a much swifter way of traveling than going by carriage," Lady Elysia mused. "Anyway, now that they're taken care of, I should check on what's happened at the palace."

Lady Elysia instructed her household staff to gather more information about the ongoing situation at the palace, then turned back to the seamstresses waiting in the corner of the room. "I will need you to work hard from here on," she told them with a warm smile. "The New Year's Festival is just around the corner, after all."

The seamstresses nodded and resumed their work. At that moment, a servant entered to announce another visitor.

“Now, who might it be this time?”

“It is a woman who says she is the owner of the Elf’s Repose Inn.”

“Aah, yes, she’s the one Giuseppe mentioned who is well-acquainted with Tatsumi’s world. Please, bring her in right away,” Elysia instructed, making the most of the opportunity while Calsedonia and Tatsumi were away at the palace. It seemed like a good time to advance Giuseppe’s plans.

After a brief wait, Elle was escorted in by a servant. “Um... I was directed here by the High Priest of the Temple of Savaiv,” she said, her voice tinged with nervousness. It seemed being in the presence of a noble, especially one from one of the country’s leading families, made her uncomfortable. “He mentioned you had some need of me.”

Lady Elysia didn’t answer right away, taken aback by the sight of Elle. She’d known that the woman was well-versed in the ways of Japan, the country where Tatsumi came from, but she hadn’t expected her to be an elf.

*That crafty old man, keeping it from me on purpose.*

Caught by one of Giuseppe’s playful tricks, Lady Elysia felt a moment of irritation, which she concealed. “I’ve heard about you from Giuseppe,” she told Elle with a friendly smile. “I was wondering if you could tell me more about the world where Tatsumi came from.”

“Japan, you mean?” Elle clarified.

“Yes, exactly,” Lady Elysia confirmed.

Upon understanding why she’d been summoned, surprise flickered over Elle’s face, followed by a gentle smile. “I see; so that’s why you called me. I’d be happy to help however I can.”

Both women exchanged pleased smiles and immediately got down to business, discussing various details about Tatsumi’s world.

Thus, unbeknownst to Tatsumi and Calsedonia, Giuseppe’s scheme continued to unfold, slowly drawing various individuals into its orbit.



Tatsumi and Calsedonia teleported to an altitude that allowed them to look down over the entire palace, surveying the situation below. Calsedonia used a Fall Control spell to slow their rapid descent, but the wind still howled past their ears to the point they could barely hear one another speak.

Tatsumi leaned close to Calsedonia's ear, then called out, "I've never been to the palace. Are you familiar with it, Chiko?"

"Yes! I've been there several times as part of my healing duties, though I've never entered the more critical sections!" Calsedonia yelled back in reply. Most other healers would give a similar answer, since unless they were needed elsewhere in the palace, they would typically stay in the designated waiting area. "Where did the accident happen?"

"Giuseppe said it was at the jousting tournament area!"

As they descended from the sky, Tatsumi scanned the palace grounds, though he didn't know the layout well enough to identify any specific locations. "There are a lot of people gathering over there!" he pointed out to Calsedonia. "Could that be the right place?"

"I think it is!" Calsedonia confirmed. "That's the training ground. The jousting tournaments are held there every year!"

Still plummeting toward the ground at a shocking amount of speed, the two nodded at each other in mutual agreement. Tatsumi tightened his grip on Calsedonia, then released a burst of golden magical energy, readying himself to land.



Just as they'd figured, it appeared the accident they'd been called to assist with had occurred at the training ground. With the New Year's Festival fast approaching, preparations for the jousting tournament—one of the celebratory events—was in full swing.

Participation in the jousting tournament was restricted to knights, nobles, and royals, but its dramatic nature drew vast crowds of commoners to watch each year. Unlike nobles, who could enjoy the event from well-built viewing stands that remained in place all year long, commoners were forced either to stand or sit on makeshift benches made from stacked logs. Each log was quite long and heavy, which made putting them together each year a precarious situation.

Unsurprisingly, it was during the assembly of the benches that the accident had occurred. One of the stacks of logs had collapsed, trapping several lower-ranked soldiers and laborers who were working nearby underneath. The crushing weight of the logs had severely injured some, while others had sustained near-fatal wounds from falling to the ground off the top of the stack.

It was amid this chaos that Tatsumi and Calsedonia arrived. When their feet hit the ground, they were immediately engulfed in a crowd of knights, soldiers, and clerics scrambling to help the injured. Tatsumi was overwhelmed briefly by the shouting and tense atmosphere of the scene, but he quickly rallied and pulled Calsedonia forward.

“We are from the Temple of Savaiv!” Tatsumi called out. “We’re here to help with the rescue!”

“I’m Calsedonia Chrysoprase from the Temple of Savaiv!” Calsedonia added. “I’ll start treating the wounded right away!”

The palace guards and soldiers were all well aware of who the Saintess was—there was a rumor that the number of training injuries mysteriously increased whenever she was on duty—and a wave of relief swept through the injured upon hearing she had arrived to offer them aid. Naturally, many of those who’d been wounded began to gravitate toward her for help, hoping to be healed by her reputedly powerful magical abilities.

As Calsedonia readied herself to get started, Tatsumi felt a sudden surge of concern for her. Given her renown as the Saintess, the demand for her healing abilities was understandable, but he was acutely aware that her magical power was not limitless. Moreover, due to the severity of the injuries among the



wounded, healing them all at once could prove life-threatening. They would need to prioritize who Calsedonia healed, focusing on those most in need.

“Wait, Calsedonia!” Tatsumi burst out, intent on trying to instill some order to the situation. “That’s not the way you shoul—”

It was too late. As soon as the injured had realized who she was, they’d begun to crowd around her in increasing numbers. In a frantic attempt to manage the situation, Tatsumi stepped forward to act as a barrier between Calsedonia and the approaching crowd.

“Please wait! Her healing magic should be prioritized for those with the most severe injuries!”

The crowd paused momentarily at Tatsumi’s plea. They looked at him, a stranger with unfamiliar features, with suspicion.

“Who are you? You look like a priest of the Savaiv God—a high ranking one, at that—but what right do you have to interfere with the Saintess’s healing?”

An injured knight stepped forward, his arm hanging limply at his side, blood dripping from his fingertips. “I won’t take orders from you,” the knight spat, pushing past Tatsumi to stand in front of Calsedonia. “Saintess, please proceed with your healing magic.”

Calsedonia didn’t move right away. Instead, expression conflicted, she looked between Tatsumi and the knight. She wanted to heal him, but she found herself unable to simply disregard Tatsumi’s wise counsel.

As the knight puzzled over why Calsedonia hadn’t begun to treat him, Tatsumi stepped in between him and Calsedonia once again.

“Please wait!” he repeated. “Calsedonia’s magical power is finite. We should prioritize those with severe injuries.”

“I already *told* you, don’t order me around! It’s better to start healing those nearby first!”

The knight tried to push Tatsumi aside with his uninjured arm, but his hand swept through empty air as Tatsumi slightly shifted position, dodging him.

“Wha—? You little...”

Anger kindled on the knight's face, though whether it had been Tatsumi's refusal to listen to him that sparked it or simply that he'd dodged his blow, Tatsumi couldn't be sure.

"Are you trying to insult me?!" the knight spat, placing his hand on the sword at his waist. He seemed ready to draw it at any moment.

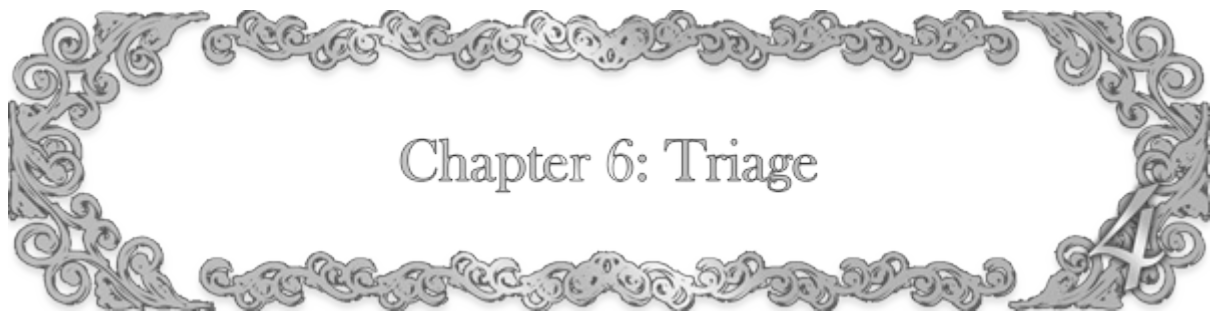
The knight wasn't the only one who was looking toward Tatsumi with hostility. Everyone who had gathered there, seeking Calsedonia's healing magic, was staring at him with dissatisfied eyes, as if he was interfering with the healing process instead of trying to help.

"I'm not trying to insult you," Tatsumi said gently. "But as I said before, her magical power isn't infinite. Therefore—"

"Shut up! How many times do I have to say I won't take orders from the likes of you?!" The knight reached over to draw his sword, which released a metallic *shk* as his fingers wrapped around the hilt.

The weapon never cleared its sheath.

"This is an emergency. What do you all think you're doing?" a calm, yet imposing male voice demanded.



## Chapter 6: Triage

The source of the voice was a tall, well-built man, appearing to be in his late thirties or early forties. He had a handsome face, but the lower half was obscured by a thick beard, which gave him a rugged look. Judging demeanor—and his attire—it was clear he was someone of high status.

“And what’s all this commotion about?” the man continued, scanning the gathered crowd with a sharp gaze. “This is hardly the time for it.”

“Captain Taurod! This insolent priest here is interfering with the Saintess’s treatments!” the knight who had tried to draw his sword accused, pointing at Tatsumi.

“He’s what?” Taurod directed a piercing look towards Tatsumi.

Tatsumi stood firm under that intense scrutiny, while Calsedonia, standing by his side, looked almost pleased.

“Are you referring to this man right here as an insolent priest? My brother-in-law?” Taurod inquired.

“Y-Yes, he’s the one! Wait... this guy’s your brother-in-law?! This insolent cleric?!”

“To be precise, he’s my soon-to-be brother-in-law, but I already consider him as such,” Taurod clarified.

The previously blustering knight looked shocked, glancing back and forth between Taurod and Tatsumi.

“Tatsumi, Calsedonia. Explain the situation,” Taurod commanded, his expression still stern.

Captain Taroud Chrysoprase was the captain of the second squadron of the Largofiery's knights, the eldest son of Giuseppe, and Calsedonia's stepbrother. Although he could be mistaken for Calsedonia's father given their age difference, he cherished her as a family member and regarded her as a beloved stepsister. He'd initially been skeptical about Tatsumi becoming Calsedonia's partner, as he'd thought Tatsumi had a sort of shady aura about him, but after speaking with Giuseppe, Calsedonia, and Tatsumi himself he'd concluded that he was indeed a man worthy of his dear stepsister.

Since then, Taroud had treated Tatsumi as both a brother-in-law and a member of his family. Tatsumi, in turn, had grown fond of the significantly older captain, and placed a great deal of trust in him.

"Taroud, let me explain," Calsedonia began, looking troubled as she glanced between her brother-in-law and Tatsumi.

"Um, you see, Taroud..." Tatsumi hesitated.

"I'm sorry?" Taroud's face turned visibly irritable as he glared at Tatsumi.

Tatsumi flinched, but then corrected himself awkwardly, "Er... Big bro."

"Yes, that's better." The captain nodded in satisfaction.

Ever since acknowledging Tatsumi, Taroud had insisted on being addressed as "Big Bro." Tatsumi's failure to do so had clearly soured his mood, though that just went to show how fond Taurod had gotten of him.

"This is an emergency. Keep it brief," Taroud prompted.

Tatsumi his point of view of the incident. With accidents like this, where there were so many injured and medical supplies were limited, he knew it was crucial to treat those in most urgent need first. In addition, to ensure they were choosing which patients to care for in the right order, an assessment of all the injured was needed so they could organize them into groups. It was a process Tatsumi had picked up from watching TV dramas and consuming other forms of media.

"In my homeland, this method is known as triage," Tatsumi explained.

“Hmm. Indeed, that’s a rational way of thinking,” Taroud said thoughtfully. “But in this country, where high-ranking individuals such as nobles are treated first, I’m afraid many will find it rather unusual.”

“Putting that aside, isn’t it a problem that everyone is independently providing aid?” Tatsumi asked. “Wouldn’t it be more efficient if someone took command and issued directions on how and when to provide treatment?”

“In regard to that,” Taroud replied, “His Majesty the King, upon hearing of the accident, commanded me to come take charge of the relief effort.” Taroud paused, taking a moment to survey the scene and the injured people scattered all around. Then, out of nowhere, he made an extraordinary declaration. “All right, Tatsumi. You take command.”

“Me?!” Tatsumi exclaimed. “But that’s impossible!”

“Your triage concept is unfamiliar to me, but I judge that your method could save more lives. Therefore, it’s only logical for you, someone who is familiar with the method, to take command.”

“Familiar?! I’ve only heard a bit about it myself!” Tatsumi protested.

“Even so, you know more than those who know nothing. Don’t worry, I will assist you where you fall short. And Calsedonia will gladly follow your directions,” Taroud reassured him.

Turning to look at Calsedonia, Tatsumi saw her smile and nod. “I apologize for being overeager earlier,” she said meekly. “I just thought we should start treating the injured as quickly as possible...”

“It’s understandable. I’m still not fully accustomed to the norms of this country,” Tatsumi admitted.

Having Calsedonia step forward in this situation would be convenient, since her renown as the Saintess would naturally reassure those to whom she was administering care. However, that approach only worked when Calsedonia alone was healing the injured. To efficiently utilize all available healers at the scene, implementing Tatsumi’s suggestion was undoubtedly the best option.

“All right, I’ll give it a try,” Tatsumi decided after a moment of contemplation. This was not the time for hesitation. Some of the injured individuals might die if



they waited too long. “Big Bro, please gather all the healers for me first. I’d like those who may not be able to use magic but have medical knowledge as well.”

“Understood,” Taroud responded, turning to promptly dispatch his subordinates to collect the people Tatsumi had asked for. The knights quickly returned and assembled the required personnel around Tatsumi, who then prepared to take charge.

“I am Tatsumi Yamagata, a senior priest of the Savaiv Temple. At the request of Lord Taroud of the royal knights, I have been entrusted with taking command at this time. You may have your reservations, but this is an emergency. Please follow my directions.”

The gathered healers and doctors, unfamiliar with the young man with jet-black hair and eyes, stared at him with confused faces. However, with Taroud, a royal knight captain, and the renowned Saintess backing him, none voiced any complaints.

“First, I would ask the doctors to assess each injured person, determine the severity of their injuries, and categorize them into groups based on how urgently they need care.”

“Categorize them into groups...? What’s the purpose of that?” asked one of the doctors. His question was echoed by nods from the others.

“It’s so we can focus on the patients who need us most, who are more likely to die based on their injuries. They will receive healing magic first, while the other, less high-risk patients safely await their turn.”

“What? We’re not prioritizing nobles?”

“No. It may seem an odd way to do things to you, but I ask you to please set aside conventional practices for now.”

The doctors and magicians, looking uneasy, glanced behind Tatsumi at where Taroud was standing.

“I’ll take responsibility for this,” he reassured them, clapping Tatsumi on the shoulder. “Just follow his instructions quietly for now.”

For the doctors, the fear of facing complaints from nobles later on was likely daunting. In a country where it was customary to prioritize high-status individuals for treatment, treating the most severely injured regardless of status could easily provoke complaints from disgruntled nobles. However, since Taroud, the captain of the royal knights, assured them he would take responsibility, the doctors felt they could follow Tatsumi's directions without objection. They, too, wanted to save as many lives as possible.

"Please mark those who are in critical condition and require immediate magical healing with an X. For those whose injuries are severe but not as urgent, a wavy line. And for those with only minor injuries, you can use a circle," Tatsumi ordered, writing out the instructions on the ground for clarity. "Do you have something to make the markings with? If not, I can have Captain Taroud arrange something immediately."

"As doctors, we always carry pens and ink," one of the healers replied, patting his bag. The others nodded in agreement, then quickly began to assess the injured.

In modern medical settings back on Earth, triage rankings were typically indicated using a four-tiered color system. Each ranking had specific criteria—the black tier, for example, was used for those who were either dead or showed no signs of life and had no chance of resuscitation. Red indicated those who were critically injured or who required immediate intervention, yellow indicated those whose injuries were not immediately life threatening but could easily become so, and green indicated those who didn't need any urgent treatment or transportation or perhaps might not need any treatment at all.

The criteria used for deciding how to rank patients was not entirely set in stone, but could vary based on multiple factors, including the situation on the ground and the capacity of surrounding medical facilities. There was no absolute standard.

Tatsumi had learned all about it from watching reporting on natural disasters and other emergency scenarios on the news when he'd been back in Japan, and it'd been clear to him that many lives had been saved due to the utilization of the system. In this world things would be a little different, however, in that a highly effective treatment was available for a wide variety of wounds: healing

magic. With that in mind, Tatsumi had decided to keep the ranking criteria simple and categorize the injuries into three levels.

“Please prioritize healing those marked with an X,” Tatsumi requested of the healers, his eyes on Calsedonia.

“Understood,” she said with a bow, and the other healers nodded in agreement.

“Big Bro, please instruct your subordinates to gather the injured in one place. If possible, arrange them by their markers. It will be more convenient for the healers to administer treatment that way. However, please do not move those who are unconscious or unable to move. Similarly, those with head injuries should not be moved recklessly, as that may cause their conditions to worsen.”

“Got it,” Taroud confirmed with a nod. He immediately sent his subordinates to carry out Tatsumi’s instructions.

That done, Tatsumi and Taroud settled in one corner of the training grounds to oversee the treatment of the injured. While Tatsumi was not a professional, he possessed more knowledge about triage than anyone else present, and he took each question he was asked seriously, striving to find the best possible answers. Supported by Taroud, who was always by his side, and Calsedonia, who checked in from time to time, he tirelessly issued instructions.

Amid Tatsumi’s efforts to manage the situation, a knight approached. Tatsumi immediately recognized him as the man who had confronted him earlier, though his left arm was now wrapped in a bandage. It looked like his injury had been relatively minor.

“Ah, you are...”

“My lord, I owe you an apology,” the knight said, bowing deeply. “A doctor who treated my arm told me about your ideas concerning healing, and...” He chuckled ruefully. “You know, I’ve come to realize you’re right. No mage, not even the Saintess, has infinite magical power. Honestly, no one does.”

Tatsumi gave the man a half smile. Ironically, he was one of the few who practically did.

“I’ve always thought myself more knight than noble,” the knight continued. He explained that he was the fourth son of a noble family who had chosen to enter the military, as he wouldn’t be able to inherit any of his parents’ estate. “And yet, it seems all this time I’ve been resting on my noble laurels a bit too much. I’m really sorry about earlier. And even if you don’t want to accept my apology, if there’s anything I can do to help, please just say the word.”

“Got it. I’ll keep you in mind. But how’s your arm holding up?” Tatsumi asked, nodding towards the bandage.

The knight laughed, patting his wounded arm lightly. “Oh, it’s nothing serious. I’m actually embarrassed I thought about demanding the Saintess’s healing for something so minor. Oh, and I haven’t introduced myself yet. I’m Gail Utrillos. Please, call me Gail.”

“I’m Tatsumi Yamagata, but just Tatsumi is fine.”

The two shook hands warmly, but their conciliation was soon interrupted by a scream.

“Master!” Calsedonia shouted, her expression fraught with urgency as she rushed toward them. “Please come quickly! We need you!”

“Right! Lead the way!” Tatsumi didn’t pause to ask for details. If Calsedonia said his help was needed, that was enough for him.

Tatsumi and Calsedonia raced to the scene, Gail hurrying after them. Soon, they arrived at a spot where a log lay on the ground. Beside it, where the earth was dark and damp, a soldier lay sprawled. A stake about ten centimeters in diameter was impaled through his right thigh.

“It looks like the soldier fell onto one of the stakes that were meant to secure the log when it collapsed,” Tatsumi noted grimly.

“It’s likely he was trying to escape when he stepped on the edge of the stake. It flipped up, pointing upwards, and he fell onto it,” Calsedonia explained with a pained expression.

A closer inspection revealed that the man’s head injuries had already been treated and the bleeding had stopped. The only issue remaining was the stake embedded in his leg.

“If we pull it out just like that,” Gail interjected, his face etched with concern, “he might bleed out instantly.”

“That’s why I will cast a healing spell the moment we remove the stake. It should minimize the bleeding,” Calsedonia assured him.

“Still, pulling out such a thick stake won’t be easy,” Tatsumi cautioned. The sharp wood had completely pierced through the soldier’s thigh. Without advanced surgical techniques, which this world lacked, they might have to resort to brute force—a risky and painful procedure for the injured soldier.

“I’ll gather some people,” Gail declared, turning to take off.

“No need,” Tatsumi said, stopping him in his tracks. “We’ll handle it here, just the three of us.”

Without even glancing back at Gail, Tatsumi shifted his gaze to Calsedonia. Meeting his eyes, she nodded and knelt beside the fallen soldier, then began to chant a healing spell without concern for the blood staining her cleric robes. Tatsumi squatted next to her, ready to unleash his magic.

Gail was the only one perplexed, unable to grasp their intentions. “Wh-What are you two doing?” he asked.

Instead of replying, Calsedonia finished her incantation and then sent Tatsumi a quick glance—the signal he’d been waiting for. He touched the stake impaled through the soldier’s thigh, then released the magic he had prepared. Instantly, the stake vanished, and the next moment, it clattered to the ground beside Tatsumi.

“What...?” Gail’s eyes widened in shock at the scene unfolding before him.

Now that the stake was gone, blood spurted from the open wound in the soldier’s leg, splattering Tatsumi and Calsedonia. Her healing spell was still at work, however, and the wound began to rapidly close. The bleeding soon slowed to a stop, minimizing blood loss just as Calsedonia had predicted.

Of course, the healing spell didn’t just seal the wound—it also repaired the bones and muscles within the man’s leg that had been damaged. Calsedonia leaned forward to check its progress, and though the man was still unconscious, she was clearly able to discern that his life was no longer in danger.

With a relieved sigh, Calsedonia smiled at Tatsumi. Understanding everything without words, he, too, let out a slow breath.

“H-Hey...” Gail muttered, still dazed. “What did you guys just do?”

Gail could understand how the soldier’s wounds had been healed—that had been the work of the renowned Saintess, after all. If anyone could heal grave injuries in a flash, it was her. However, the fact that the stake embedded in the soldier’s thigh had vanished instantly and then reappeared was beyond his comprehension.

Still not receiving an answer, Gail watched Tatsumi and Calsedonia in stunned silence for a while. As time passed, he recalled a rumor he had recently heard—a rumor about a man who could use Heaven magic that had appeared in the town in front of the palace. Until now, practitioners of that sort of magic had been confined to fairy tales and legends.

Upon first hearing the rumor, Gail had been skeptical. It’d been hard for him to believe a Heaven mage existed in real life. And yet, the phenomenon he had just witnessed was precisely the kind of magic often spoken of in fairy tales. In those stories, Heaven mages could draw distant objects to them, send something to a faraway place in an instant, or even hurl massive boulders into the sky.

All of a sudden, Gail recalled that the rumored Heaven mage was said to be a young man from a distant foreign land with black hair, black eyes, and light, amber skin.

“Wait... so is Tatsumi the guy from the rumor?” Gail muttered to himself, too out of it to consider who might hear him. “Could he have just used Heaven magic just now?!”





## Chapter 7: Together

**W**hen Tatsumi and Calsedonia finally arrived home, they were utterly exhausted. Calsedonia slipped inside as Tatsumi entered the living room, collapsing heavily into a chair.

“I’m really tired...” he moaned.

“You worked hard today.”

“You look tired too, Chiko.”

“Yes, I absolutely am.”

After exchanging looks, they both started laughing hysterically for no apparent reason.

Back at the accident site, things were now stable. Using the concept of triage, they’d been able to care for everyone without any deaths. However, there had still been casualties—before Tatsumi and Calsedonia had arrived, some had unfortunately already lost their lives.

The level of exhaustion among the healers, including Calsedonia, was sky high. There had been so many injured to care for that some of those who’d been seriously wounded but weren’t in immediate danger of death would not be able to receive treatment until the mages could recover their magic. Nonetheless, thanks to the efforts of Tatsumi, Calsedonia, Taurod, and the others, many lives had been saved.

As for Tatsumi, he’d been able to take full command of the accident site until the very end thanks to the help of his friends. Perhaps because of this, his fatigue seemed more mental than physical.

“I really wish Taurod hadn’t sprung the command of the site on me like that,” he said tiredly.

“Well, I believe you fulfilled your duties admirably, Master. And when you were confidently issuing commands, you looked quite dashing.”

“O-Oh, thanks.”

Blushing at being called handsome by Calsedonia, Tatsumi averted his gaze. Watching him, Calsedonia smiled warmly.

A tranquil and comfortable silence dominated the living room of the pair’s home, which the neighbors referred to as “the Yamagata residence,” or simply “House Yamagata.” Unexpectedly, Calsedonia was the one who eventually broke the quiet.

“Oh, I forgot! I’ll go prepare a bath for us right away.”

“Ah, yes, that sounds good. We had our meal at the temple before coming home, but a bath really sounds nice right now.”

After the accident site had stabilized, Tatsumi and Calsedonia, along with other helpers from various temples, had been permitted to return home. Taurod had been the one who released them, though he’d thanked them for their assistance first.

Tatsumi and his group had headed straight to the Savaiv Temple, where they’d reported the situation to Giuseppe and had a light meal in the temple’s dining hall before heading home.

Despite being extremely tired and not very hungry, both of them felt the need for a bath to wash away the day’s fatigue and grime. Calsedonia, who had dealt with being drenched in blood without even a flinch, likely felt this need even more strongly than Tatsumi did.

“I feel bad asking you to take care of things when you’re so tired, though... Are you sure it’s okay?”

“Yes, please just give me a moment,” Calsedonia responded cheerfully, immediately heading to the bathing area.

When it came to washing up in the Yamagata household, everything rested on Calsedonia's shoulders—or more accurately, her magic. She always used a Water Creation spell to fill the bathtub, then used a Heating spell to get it warm. Beyond that, their typical routine was for Tatsumi to bathe first, followed by Calsedonia, who would reheat the slightly cooled water using her Heating spell again.

Now that Calsedonia was preparing a bath for them, Tatsumi got up and started gathering clothes for himself to wear after he got out of the tub. He also took the time to make sure Calsedonia had a clean outfit ready as well.

Initially, Tatsumi had gotten quite flustered upon having to touch Calsedonia's undergarments, but recently, he'd grown accustomed to it and it no longer bothered him. This did not indicate a waning interest in Calsedonia, of course—he just had no particular fixation on underwear.

A short while later, Calsedonia returned from the bathing area, her expression one of troubled apology.

“What's wrong? Did something happen?” Tatsumi asked, unable to think of a reason for her to look so upset.

“Well, the thing is... I was preparing the bath, but...”

Flushing, Calsedonia explained that she had overused her healing magic during the day and was nearly depleted of magical power. Consequently, after filling the bath with water, she only had enough magic left to heat it once.

“I see. Then you go ahead and take the bath. I can just sleep as is, or maybe I'll go to the public bath in town.”

“Oh, um, about that. If it's okay with you, Master...” Calsedonia's face turned bright red, and she swayed back and forth shyly as she looked up at Tatsumi with puppy eyes. “Would you... I-like to join me in the bath?”

Tatsumi's face turned as red as Calsedonia's.

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On the surface of the bathwater, two large, pristine mounds gently bobbed. At their peaks, delicate buds were tinged with color, making them stand out vividly against the surrounding whiteness. When it came down to it, they were merely clumps of fat—so why did they draw such keen interest from men?

As they shared the bath, Tatsumi, who was embracing Calsedonia from behind, found himself unwittingly contemplating what might be considered an eternal mystery for the male sex. While submerged in the warm water, his eyes occasionally drifted over the delicate contours of her shoulders, catching glimpses of the twin peaks.

Of course, part of his mind engaged in these thoughts as a form of escapism. The bath in the Yamagata household was not particularly large. Consequently, for both of them to bathe together, they had no choice but to adopt their current intimate arrangement.

The softness of Calsedonia's butt resting on his thighs, and the warmth of her body, different from the hot water, troubled Tatsumi in more ways than one.

"It's been a while since we've bathed together like this, hasn't it, Master?" Calsedonia remarked happily, seemingly oblivious to Tatsumi's inner turmoil.

"Huh? Isn't this the first time we've shared a bath, Chiko?" It had been about a year since they started living together in this house. While they had shared a bed many times, Tatsumi couldn't ever recall them taking a bath together.

Calsedonia glanced back at Tatsumi's puzzled face over her shoulder, expression shy. "That's not true. We used to bathe together quite often before, remember?"

"Before...? Oh, you mean when you were still a cockatiel?"

Back in Japan, when Calsedonia had still been Tatsumi's pet, they *had* occasionally bathed together. However, it hadn't been in the same sense as they were now.

As a cockatiel, Chiko had bathed by wetting her feathers in a washbowl and preening herself clean. She'd often done so while perched on Tatsumi's head as he soaked in the tub.

A hot bath would have been out of the question, since it could strip away the oily coating that had protected her feathers from water droplets and dirt. Sometimes lack of oil even caused illness in birds.

Blushing for reasons beyond just the hot water, Calsedonia confessed, “To be honest, soaking in a hot bath with you, Master, has been a long-held dream of mine.”

“Really?” Tatsumi replied. “I would have bathed with you any time if you’d asked me.”

“How could I possibly say such an embarrassing thing?” Calsedonia turned her face away, even redder than before. “I couldn’t possibly bring it up myself!”

“But you’re the one who invited me today, weren’t you?”

“Today is special, because... Because my magic was depleted!” she mumbled.

Finding her even more endearing than before, Tatsumi wrapped his arms around Calsedonia from behind, embracing her slender yet soft body firmly. “Then, from now on, I’ll be the one to invite you. Will you join me again some other time?”

Calsedonia leaned back against Tatsumi’s body, smiling happily. “Yes, of course.”

For a while, the two remained silent. It wasn’t an awkward sort of quiet—instead, it was filled with a deep awareness of one another, rendering words unnecessary.

In the midst of this contented atmosphere, Calsedonia felt a ticklish sensation on her abdomen. “Master?” She turned her head back, looking sternly at the man she loved.

“Sorry,” Tatsumi said, chuckling unapologetically, as he continued gently stroking his fiancée’s abdomen. “Your skin just feels so nice. I can’t help myself.”

Calsedonia puffed out her cheeks and glared at him, though not in anger. She was simply overwhelmed with joy from being touched and praised by Tatsumi—

it was her way of hiding her bashfulness. “That’s what you always say,” she pointed out.

“Do you dislike it when I touch you like this?”

Calsedonia averted her gaze. “You know the answer to that already, don’t you? How could I possibly dislike it?”

Her murmur was faint, yet it clearly reached Tatsumi, who was close by. “Yes, I knew, but I asked anyway,” he responded, tightening his embrace around her.

“I hate it when you’re so mean, Master!”

Even as she declared her hatred, the smile on Calsedonia’s face was undeniably joyful. Twisting within Tatsumi’s arms, she boldly pressed her lips to his in a spontaneous kiss.





## Chapter 8: The Freeloader

The Freeloader was seeking what it had always been searching for—a suitable host.

The entity it had previously inhabited had deteriorated over time and could no longer serve as its shelter. Thus, the Freeloader was on the hunt for a new “dwelling tree.”

The comfort it had experienced in its previous hosts was unparalleled. Over countless ages, the Freeloader had inhabited many forms, with its most recent one being the most agreeable of all. However, that host had decayed beyond repair due to the relentless passage of time. It had seen many human settlements—towns and villages alike—but had yet to find a new host that seemed fitting.

As it moved slowly along the fringes of a town’s bustling street, it remained unseen by most of the humans. Although a rare few could perceive its presence and hear its voice, the number of those who possessed such an ability was quite negligible.

Weaving through the crowds, the Freeloader continued its search for an appropriate dwelling tree, but finding one to its liking proved challenging. Perhaps there were none suitable in this settlement.

Just as it began to seriously ponder whether or not that was true, the Freeloader finally spotted it—a dwelling tree worthy of its presence. It knew instantly that this host would offer more comfort than any it had inhabited before.

Delighted at finding such a perfect host, the Freeloader approached with a spring in its step, eager to inhabit its new home.



Seated upon an ornately decorated chair, an elderly man addressed the person kneeling before him.

“You have an interesting mind, indeed.”

“As the person in charge at the scene, I judged that his ideas would save more lives, so I let him continue to lead.”

“That is fine. You were the highest authority there. If that was your decision, then it is acceptable.” The elderly man leaned back in the chair and chuckled amusedly. “Foreign knowledge, you said. What do you think of it? From your perspective, can we use it throughout our medical practices in this kingdom?”

The person kneeling at the elderly man’s feet pondered the question for a moment before looking up to respond. “I fear it may be impractical. Such knowledge contradicts the common sense of our nation, and even if Your Majesty was to promote it personally, the nobility would likely not sit back and allow it to go forward.”

“Is that so...?” The elderly man closed his eyes while still reclined in his chair. Personally, he was open to adopting anything of value, but whether the people around him would agree was another matter entirely. He remained motionless, his thoughts drifting.

How much time passed that way, the elderly man wasn’t sure. During his period of contemplation, the kneeling person, as well as the knights standing guard around them, waited silently for him to resurface from his contemplation.

Then, all of a sudden, the elderly man opened his eyes and looked down at the man still kneeling. “Taurod. Tell Giuseppe... Tell your father that I want to speak with him again. Let that old man know.”

“Understood.”

The person kneeling—also known as Taurod Chrysoprase—bowed his head once more to the elderly man before him, then rose to leave the audience

chamber. However, a sudden and unexpected voice halted him, and he turned towards the source of the sound.

“Just a moment, Taurod.”

“Your Highness... how long have you been there?” Taurod asked, his gaze shifting behind the opulently decorated throne. Behind the layers of heavy curtains, a youth peeked out playfully.

The boy, appearing between fourteen and fifteen years old and dressed in clearly expensive attire, stepped forward without any hint of remorse.

None of the knights, including Taurod, seemed surprised by the boy’s presence, nor did they rebuke him.

The boy, smiling broadly, ignored the man whose name he had just called in favor of addressing the elderly man seated on the throne instead. “Hey, Grandpa.”

“What is it?” the man on the throne responded without any particular concern.

“The thing you were discussing with Taroud just now—it was introduced by the Heaven mage, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, that’s right. What about it?”

“Grandpa, are you saying that by inviting Old Man Giuseppe here, you’re also planning to invite that Heaven mage as well? To the royal palace?”

The man on the throne did not answer the boy’s inquiry; instead, he simply grinned.

Taking that as confirmation, a smile burst across the boy’s youthful face. The resemblance between the two at that moment was striking.

“Then, when that time comes... can I meet the Heaven mage too?”

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It was morning, close to noon, when Tatsumi finally awoke from his sleep and picked up the wristwatch beside his pillow to check the time.

“Wow. I slept this late?”

Though surprised it was nearly noon, a glance to his side revealed the pleasant visage of the woman he loved, still fast asleep. Seeing her peaceful expression made Tatsumi smile involuntarily. Normally, Calsedonia would wake up early and prepare breakfast, but it seemed she had overslept today as well.

*It's rare but understandable*, Tatsumi thought, recalling yesterday's accident at the royal training grounds. Calsedonia had healed as much as she could, until both her magical and physical energy were depleted.

“Even Chiko needs to sleep in when she's tired,” he murmured to himself.

That thought in mind, he tried to carefully extricate himself from the bed so he wouldn't wake her from her blissful slumber. He soon ran into a problem, however—Calsedonia had a tight grip on his arm. An affectionate look in his eyes, Tatsumi reached out and gently unclasped her fingers.

Deciding to wash his face before Calsedonia woke up, Tatsumi slipped his feet into his indoor slippers. But... something was off.

“Huh?”

Looking down, he noticed he'd put the slippers on the wrong feet.

“That's odd. I'm sure I set them in the right spot before getting into bed last night...” Tatsumi muttered, straightening the slippers before putting them on properly. “Could my memory be playing tricks on me?”

Pondering this, Tatsumi left the bedroom, heading towards the well.

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Calsedonia burst into the living room without even bothering to tidy her hair, looking like she'd just woken up. “Sorry!”

“Good morning, Chiko,” Tatsumi said with a smile. “There's no need to rush today; the temple is closed.”

Yesterday, after giving their report on the accident to Giuseppe, they had been granted a special day off as a reward for their efforts. Thus, they both had

the luxury of taking a leisurely morning.

“I can’t just leave you hungry, Master...”

“I said I’d take care of the meals whenever I woke up first,” Tatsumi pointed out. “I can’t make anything special like you, but I can manage *something*.”

Back in Japan, Tatsumi had rarely done any household chores. When he’d lived alone, he’d mostly bought ready-made meals—he’d hardly ever cooked for himself. However, now that he was a beast hunter that had to rough it outdoors pretty often, he’d learned to cook simple dishes.

“No, that won’t do!” Calsedonia shot back. “Preparing your meals is my important duty! It’s a role I cannot yield to anyone, not even to you, Master!”

Seeing her, aflame with determination, Tatsumi could only smile wryly. “Then I’ll leave it to you. To tell the truth, I’m really hungry.”

“Yay! I’ll get everything ready right away!”

With a joyful smile, Calsedonia nodded and hurried into the kitchen. But when she went inside, she found that several of the wooden plates she’d cleaned up the night before were still sitting out.

“Huh? That’s odd. I’m sure I put them away...”

Puzzled, Calsedonia tilted her head. Ultimately, she decided to just go ahead and use them for breakfast, and turned her focus to getting everything ready.

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Tatsumi and Calsedonia stayed home for the rest of that day, but strange things kept happening in the house. Tea that they’d been about to drink disappeared from their cups, food they’d cooked vanished during their meals, windows they’d closed were found open, and the laundry they’d hung out to dry mysteriously turned up back inside. Even the bedroom, which they hadn’t used at all during the day, had changed in some way: it’d been cleaned from top to bottom.

“Do you think there’s someone else in the house?” Tatsumi muttered as he looked around the living room.

The situation brought to mind a spooky story he'd heard back in Japan, about some strangers who'd secretly taken up residence in someone else's attic. He couldn't help but wonder if a similar situation was happening to them.

"We should check the house," he decided.

"No, I don't think that's necessary. But you're right, something has definitely taken residence here."

"What?" Startled, Tatsumi rose from his chair, looking around anxiously. "What do you mean by 'something'?!"

"I believe a brownie might have settled in with us," Calsedonia replied, completely unbothered.

"A brownie?" Tatsumi repeated, puzzled.

Calsedonia explained that a brownie was a spirit known to reside in homes. While they occasionally played minor pranks, they mainly watched over the house they'd chosen to occupy and its inhabitants from the shadows.

"True, the pranks are harmless, but could this become a problem if it continues?" Tatsumi asked.

"No, it'll be fine. All we have to do is leave a little food out in the kitchen for the brownie, and they'll quit playing tricks on us. Moreover, it's said that a house inhabited by a brownie is blessed with good luck."

With this reassurance from Calsedonia, Tatsumi felt a bit more at ease about their unseen guest and the quirky happenings within their home. "Hmm, it's almost like a *zashiki-warashi*," Tatsumi mused.

As long as it was a harmless spirit, he didn't see any issues allowing it to stay. And besides, if it brought happiness to a home like a *zashiki-warashi*, there was no reason to drive it away.

Calsedonia went on to explain the brownies who'd grown fond of a home and its inhabitants sometimes would help with household chores. That was likely why their laundry had been moved inside and their bedroom had been cleaned.

"So, in other words, the brownie likes us and our house," Tatsumi guessed.

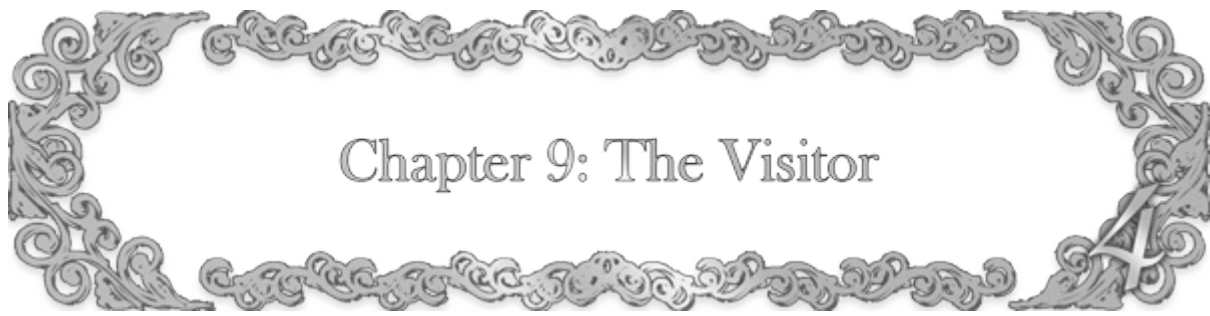
"I think so," Calsedonia agreed.



The pair exchanged cheerful smiles.

“Well then, dear brownie, please look after us,” Tatsumi called out.

“We put yourself in your care,” Calsedonia added. “Uh, but... You mustn’t peek into our bedroom at night, okay?!”



## Chapter 9: The Visitor

**A**s the New Year's festival grew near, the royal capital of Levantis buzzed with increasing activity. Merchants and performers, anticipating lucrative opportunities at the festival, were making their way to the city, but they weren't the only ones. Nobles from across the kingdom had set out as well.

As the city grew busier, excitement swelled, but so did a heightened sense of tension. As the populace grew, the city guard was no longer sufficient to rein them in, and the number of various crimes being committed began to rise. To help solve the issue, warrior priests were deployed from some of the surrounding temples to aid in maintaining public order.

Among those called upon was Tatsumi. He, along with his companions Barse and Niizu, took turns patrolling the streets alongside the other more senior warrior priests. Clad in chainmail bearing the holy insignia of Savaiv and armed with shield and sword, they would spend about half a day on patrol before returning to the Savaiv Temple to pass their duties off to another shift of priests.

In terms of assignments, Tatsumi and his fellow warrior priests were given the area around their temple to patrol, while the city guards handled Levantis's other districts. Under the guidance of a senior warrior priest, Tatsumi ended up exploring alleys and other parts of the city he had never visited, making the patrols a somewhat refreshing experience for him.

After he was done for the day, Tatsumi headed home alone. Although he and Calsedonia often appeared inseparable, the different reporting times for their temple duties meant they seldom left work together. Today, while Calsedonia

remained behind to make sure all her obligations had been fulfilled, Tatsumi decided to stop by the market to pick up ingredients for their evening meal.

Just then, an unfamiliar voice called out his name. “Hey, are you Tatsumi Yamagata? The foreigner with black hair and black eyes?”

Turning to face the speaker, Tatsumi found himself facing a boy of about fifteen years old, only slighter younger than himself. He had reddish-brown hair and dark gray eyes—a coloring typical of the citizens of Largofiery—and was dressed in such fine garments that he was immediately identifiable as a noble’s son.

“Yes, that’s me... But who are you?”

“Ah, I’m... Jolt. Just call me Jolt,” the boy said with a friendly grin. He approached Tatsumi and casually extended his right hand.

Tatsumi, while cautious, reciprocated the handshake out of a need to be polite. The boy *was* a noble, after all.

Jolt’s smile deepened further. “I’ve heard a lot about you from Old Man Giuseppe. I’ve always wanted to meet you.”

“Wait, you know Giuseppe...?”

“Yeah. Technically, I’m an acquaintance of Calsedonia’s too,” Jolt explained. He seemed to be able to tell that Tatsumi was wary of him, but he didn’t seem offended by it. “My grandfather and Old Man Giuseppe have been friends since they were young, and I even got tutored by him when I was little. That’s when he introduced me to Calsedonia.”

The explanation seemed reasonable enough to Tatsumi. His guard relaxed slightly. “So... what do you need from me?”

“Ah, drop the formal talk, will ya? Come on, relax a bit,” Jolt chided, maintaining his easygoing smile.

His demeanor didn’t seem to hint at any ulterior motives, and since Tatsumi generally liked people with such gregarious personalities, he found himself warming up to him.

“All right, Jolt. What do you want with me?”

“Nice, nice. Keep that up, will ya? As for why I’m here... Well, it’s not really something to discuss in the middle of the street. How about we sit down somewhere and talk?”

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Once Tatsumi and Jolt had settled into a suitable café and ordered their drinks, Jolt decided to get straight to the point.

“Let me cut to the chase,” he said. “Would you hand over Calsedonia to me?”

“No,” Tatsumi flatly refused.

“What? A straight no?” Jolt asked in surprise. “You haven’t even heard my offer yet. Shouldn’t you hear it before you decide?”

Tatsumi’s guard immediately went up to its highest level. “There’s no need. No matter how tempting the conditions, I have absolutely no intention of parting with Chiko.”

“Hmm, interesting. I mean, not to boast, but I’m a pretty high-status guy. I might not have power right now, but when I take over in the future, I’ll be able to hand out wealth and status on a whim. I could even elevate you to a high noble in this country, you know. And instead of Calsedonia, I could arrange for you to marry my sister.”

“No amount of wealth, honor, position, or power would be enough. Nothing could compensate for Chiko.”



“Oh, come on. Are you saying that one woman is more important to you than wealth, honor, position, and power?”

“Of course.”

“Wow, another instant answer...” Jolt said, his expression disbelieving.

“More importantly, did you really wait for me to come out of the temple just to say such nonsensical things?” Tatsumi snapped.

“Well, yes,” Jolt admitted. “Actually, my grandfather said he was going to invite you to meet him, so I thought I’d see you then, but he refused. He told me I should make the effort myself as a matter of courtesy. So, I came to see you.”

“You went through all that trouble because you want Chiko? Then sorry, but this is where I end this conversation.” Tatsumi slammed a few silver coins on the table as if to settle his bill and then stood up from his chair.

Despite Tatsumi’s clearly furious demeanor, Jolt burst out laughing. “Ha ha ha. I see, you’re exactly as Giuseppe described.” His expression sobering, the younger man bowed deeply to Tatsumi. “I apologize for testing you like that. On behalf of Gioltrion Rezo Largofiery, I formally apologize.”

Tatsumi stiffened at Gioltrion’s use of his full name. The structure of the name, with three parts, and the inclusion of “Largofiery,” indicated a significant status within this country, something Tatsumi had been taught by Giuseppe.

“On behalf of *who*? You’re... royalty...?”

“Yep, sure am! Didn’t I mention my status was quite high? If we’re being specific, my grandfather is the current king, and my father is the heir apparent. As my father’s eldest son, if all goes well, I’m slated to be the next king after him.”

Now it was Tatsumi’s turn to look foolish. His entire face rippled with confusion. Gioltrion wasn’t just claiming to be of high status—he was claiming to be one of the three people at the very pinnacle of the nation’s hierarchy.

Seeing Tatsumi’s reaction, Gioltrion let out another carefree laugh, clearly amused by the shock he had caused. “Really, I’m sorry, okay? I just wanted to

see if you were really as Giuseppe described you,” the archduke explained as he and Tatsumi resettled into their seats.

With the tea now served, the pair resumed their conversation over their drinks.

“What do you mean by that?” Tatsumi asked cautiously.

“Ah, relax, man,” Gioltrion continued with a charming smile. “Sure, I’m royalty, but this isn’t a formal setting, and you’re a priest who operates outside the typical national framework. Let’s just keep things casual, all right?”

With a wry smile, Tatsumi decided to accept his approach. “Okay, I’ll go along with that,” he agreed. “But what did you mean by what you said earlier?”

“Let me be blunt again. What I wanted wasn’t Calsedonia. It’s you, Tatsumi.”

“Me...? You mean you want me to become one of your subordinates?”

“No, no, not at all. Sure, I like to keep talented individuals close, but what I’m asking isn’t for you to be a subordinate. What I want from you, Tatsumi, is... Well, I want you to become my friend. A true, trustworthy friend.”

Taken aback by Gioltrion’s straightforward request for friendship, Tatsumi blinked in surprise.

“Look, given my position, you can imagine how many people I have trying to cozy up to me, right? But I can’t just trust them easily. Sure, some are indeed worthy of trust, but those folks often come with their own sets of baggage due to their families or whatnot. And if I get too close to them, that alone makes them a target for jealousy, and... Well, you know.”

Seeing that Gioltrion’s request truly came from the heart, Tatsumi just listened to him speak quietly.

“Think about it from my perspective, Tatsumi. You’re a priest who exists outside of the structure of the state, so even if a bond forms between you and I, it wouldn’t be a master-servant one. That means the nobles couldn’t say much about it, right? Plus, you’ve got Giuseppe behind you. Not many nobles would want to cross royalty like me or a high priest like Giuseppe. Plus, you don’t have any political ambitions, so you wouldn’t abuse your position.” He chuckled.



“Anyway, Calsedonia sure is well-loved, huh? I wish she could have heard your passionate words earlier. If it broke through her aloof façade, I would have loved to see it.”

“Her aloof façade?” Tatsumi echoed, confused. “I can’t say I’ve ever seen that part of her. She’s not distant at all around me.”

Over the past few years, Calsedonia had been busy preparing for Tatsumi’s summoning while fulfilling her priestess duties. She had rarely seen Gioltrion since she was little. Back then, she’d had minimal interactions with others since she was a priestess, and though she’d managed to smile politely at those she met, she had never been very friendly. That demeanor, which had made her seem so detached from others, had been part of the reason people had started calling her the Saintess.

Since reuniting with Tatsumi, Calsedonia’s expressions had brightened and softened, and she’d overall become more expressive. Gioltrion, however, had not seen this change. They’d had no reason to meet one another since she had summoned Tatsumi to this world.

“Wait, really?” Gioltrion asked, astonished. “That’s unbelievable!”

Tatsumi laughed at his reaction, making the young archduke pout. The wariness he’d felt toward Gioltrion had entirely disappeared at this point, and though he wasn’t sure if they would become best friends, he felt open to the idea of them forging a friendship.

“Is it really that hard to believe?” Tatsumi asked. “Why don’t you just come over to our place sometime and... Hey, wait. Is a royal like you supposed to be wandering around the city alone?” Gioltrion was the future king, after all—he needed some sort of protection.

“Ah, don’t worry about that,” Gioltrion reassured Tatsumi. “My grandfather gave me permission, which means that there are probably a few guards lurking around that we haven’t even noticed. And besides, you’re with me now, right? If something happened, you could just grab me and run, couldn’t you?”

“Well, if it’s just running away, then I’m somewhat confident in my skills...”

“Exactly—I’ve heard about your abilities. Oh, and by the way, I used a secret passage to get out of the palace.”

“A secret passage...? Well, I suppose most palaces have them.”

“That’s right. I can show you two or three if you want; you could use them to visit me anytime. Of course, Calsedonia is welcome too.”

“Aren’t those secret passages national secrets or something...?” Tatsumi muttered, feeling a headache coming on. Although, if he was being honest, it wouldn’t be that difficult for him to infiltrate the palace even without the secret passages.

“How about we just forget them for now,” Gioltrion conceded, seeing the stress on Tatsumi’s face. “You’re still welcome to come over, just give me a heads-up first. If you come unannounced, I might not be around.”

“Fair enough. For now, I’d like to go see my wife, so I’ll let you know when I’m free to visit. I’ll make sure to give you plenty of advance notice.”

Tatsumi and Gioltrion exchanged genuine smiles. Then, as if on cue, they shook each other’s hands firmly.

Thus began the friendship between Tatsumi and the future King Gioltrion, who would later be hailed as a wise ruler and memorialized in the history books as the famous exorcist, Sky Soarer.

“By the way, why do you call Calsedonia ‘Chiko,’ Tatsumi? Is there a reason for that?” Gioltrion asked.

“Uh, well, that’s...” Tatsumi’s eyes darted around nervously.

Seeing this, Gioltrion smirked mischievously back at him. “Is it a secret between the two of you? How sweet and charming! Don’t worry, I won’t ask for details.”

“Sh-Shut up!! It’s none of your business, Gioltrion!”



## Chapter 10: Giuseppe's Mischief

**“M**y duties are on the afternoon of the first day and the morning of the third day,” Tatsumi noted.

He was in the courtyard of the Savaiv Temple along with Barse, Niizu, Shiro, Sago, Calsedonia, and Gioltrion, chatting with them about everyone’s work schedules for the upcoming New Year’s Festival.

“In that case, since we’re in the same group, I’ll be working at the same times,” Barse added. “That means we should be able to watch the jousting tournament on the afternoon of the last day. Great, I’ll watch it with Nanu.”

“We brothers have to work during that time...” Niizu lamented. “Damn, I was looking forward to the jousting tournament...”

“It can’t be helped, Niizu,” one of his brothers said with a sigh. “This is our job.”

“Looks like I’m scheduled to work on the morning of the second day,” Calsedonia chimed in. “Oh, but on the afternoon of the third day, Grandfather asked me to assist with a ceremony to bless newborns.”

“Ah, I... I think I was asked to help with that too...” Tatsumi stammered, blushing slightly as he averted his gaze from Calsedonia, who was seated beside him.

Seeing his behavior, Calsedonia tilted her head slightly, puzzled, but her mind quickly went back to the festival schedule. “In that case, Master, we can enjoy the festival together on the afternoon of the second day!” she exclaimed.

“Y-Yes, we can.”

“In the afternoon of the second day, there’s the treasure hunt organized by the Temple of the Evening Moon, right? Why don’t you and Calsedonia join in?” Gioltrion suggested. “With your ability to go from place to place so quickly, Tatsumi, you’ll be able to find a lot of treasures.”

“Huh, you’re probably right. I doubt it’ll be that simple, though... Anyway, what about you, Gioltrion? Any plans?”

“Me? The only thing I have to do is attend Grandpa’s... I mean, His Majesty’s speech on the first day, and that’s pretty much it. My dad doesn’t expect much of me since he still thinks I’m just a kid.”

Recently, Gioltrion had been frequently showing up at the Savaiv Temple. At first, Barse and the other priests had been suspicious of him. They’d guessed from his attire that he must be a noble from a high-ranking family, but they had no clue which one. However, once they’d seen how friendly he was with Tatsumi and that he treated everyone the same without any concern for status, they’d gradually warmed up to him.

After that, Tatsumi had come to the decision to keep Gioltrion’s true identity to himself. He knew that if Barse and the others knew of Gioltrion’s royal status, they probably wouldn’t be anywhere near as open with him as they were now.

Thankfully, it didn’t look like Gioltrion’s slip up about the king was going to be a problem. Barse and his group didn’t appear to have found what he’d said that unusual, since it was customary for all the nobles to be present at the king’s New Year’s address.

Calsedonia, however, was more than aware of Gioltrion’s true identity. When he’d suddenly appeared at the Savaiv Temple, walking alone without any entourage, she’d been in total disbelief. Her surprise had only grown when Gioltrion greeted her with, “Hey, Calsedonia, long time no see. By the way, where’s Tatsumi? Aren’t you two usually together?” She’d been left puzzling over when he’d randomly become so close with her husband. It was only later that she’d learned from Tatsumi how the two had met.

“I actually wanted to see the jousting tournament,” Gioltrion commented.

“In that case, the preliminaries should be held on the afternoon of the second day,” Calsedonia told him. “The finals will take place on the afternoon of the

third day, the last day of the festival.”

“Got it. Maybe I’ll go watch that. Chiko, will you join me?” Tatsumi asked.

“Yes, of course I will!” Calsedonia replied with a broad smile, clearly delighted to be asked to accompany him.

For Barse and Niizu, Calsedonia’s joy was a familiar sight, but it was new to Gioltrion. It was the first time he had seen Calsedonia so openly happy.

“Wow, I heard she’d opened up around people more, but to see her smile like that for Tatsumi... Man, it’s really something,” Gioltrion remarked, visibly surprised.

“We told you, Gioltrion. That’s how Lady Calsedonia always is around Tatsumi.”

“You might’ve told me, but I was skeptical until I saw it with my own eyes. Knowing the old Calsedonia as I did...”

“We only knew of Lady Calsedonia through rumors before,” Barse chimed in. “We got close to her right before she got engaged to Tatsumi. She’s been like this the entire time we’ve known her.”

“Don’t you think the new Calsedonia is far better than the old one? To be the reason for that kind of change... Tatsumi’s amazing, now that I think about it.”

“Um, Lord Gioltrion...?” Calsedonia said hesitantly, feeling a bit flustered by all the talk about her. She glanced nervously at Tatsumi to see his reaction.

He immediately gave her a reassuring nod, which put her at ease. With that simple gesture, her smile returned. Subtly, she shifted closer to Tatsumi, adjusting her seat to snuggle closer to him.

“Hey, Calsedonia, you should stop calling me ‘Lord.’ If Tatsumi and Barse are on a first-name basis with me, you should be too. Okay?”

“Uh, but...”

“If it’s too hard to drop the formalities, remember that you used to call me Jolt. We were both so young when our grandfather’s introduced us that it was easier for you to say.”

“That was because we were both children then...” Calsedonia protested weakly. “Are you sure it’s really okay?”

“Yes, it’s fine, it’s fine,” Gioltrion insisted with a cheerful smile.

“Oh! Um, I’d like to make a request as well,” said someone out of nowhere. It was Shiro, who had been watching Gioltrion and Calsedonia’s interaction with a hint of envy. “I’d like Lady Calsedonia to call me ‘Shiro’ as well! And if I may be so bold, perhaps she could look down at me disdainfully while stepping on me with her high-heeled shoes as I grovel pitifully on the ground!”

Naturally, that bizarre request was ignored.

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The peaceful break that Tatsumi and his companions were enjoying in the temple courtyard was abruptly ended by the arrival of a senior priest.

“Senior Priest Yamagata,” they called out with a calm smile, their voice low and soothing.

“Yes?”

Tatsumi quickly stood up, and Calsedonia, Barse, and all the others rose as well. Only Gioltrion, who was not a part of the clergy, remained casually seated.

“His Eminence Chrysoprase requests your presence. Please come to his office immediately.”

“Understood,” Tatsumi responded instantly, his voice calm but confident.

Having successfully delivered his message, the senior priest turned around with a smile and left the courtyard.

“Well, break time’s over, I guess,” Barse said as he stretched out his body. “Back to our duties.”

Calsedonia and the Niizu brothers also prepared to return to their respective tasks, accepting the end of their brief respite.

“Good luck with your work, everyone,” Gioltrion said nonchalantly. It seemed like he was trying to encourage everyone.

“What are you gonna do now, Gioltrion?” someone asked.

“Me? I don’t plan to get in the way of your work, so I’ll just head back home,” Gioltrion replied, casting a quick glance toward his home—the royal palace—as he stood up.

“I wonder what Grandfather needs from Master?” Calsedonia pondered.

“Uh, well, I guess I’ll find out when I get there...” Tatsumi replied, though he seemed uncertain. “I’ll go ahead and go see Giuseppe then.”

“All right. See you back at home,” Calsedonia said, cheerfully waving goodbye.

With that, Barse, Niizu, and the others returned to their posts, and Gioltrion left the temple grounds as well. Tatsumi, meanwhile, headed toward Giuseppe’s office and whatever awaited him inside, leaving behind the serene environment of the courtyard.

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Once Tatsumi had entered Giuseppe’s office, the High Priest immediately asked him with a mischievous grin, “How about it, son-in-law? Has Calsedonia caught on to anything?”

“No, I don’t think so,” Tatsumi replied. “She hasn’t said anything about it at home.”

“Good, then. Just keep it a secret for a little while longer,” Giuseppe ordered, a playful look on his face. He looked like a child in the midst of plotting out a prank.

Tatsumi could only smile wryly at his mentor’s antics. “Speaking of, is everything ready on your end?” he asked, trying to steer the conversation toward event planning.

“Aye. Even that crafty fox has been quite enthusiastic about helping out. Everything’s prepared, and now we’re just waiting for the main event. What about you?”

“I’ve finished arranging for the outfits at the shop you recommended. Elle was very happy to help. And of course, I haven’t told Chiko anything.”



Hearing this, Giuseppe nodded with satisfaction. “The festival is just around the corner. I’m really looking forward to this year’s celebration.”

“To be honest, I’m so nervous I can barely breathe,” Tatsumi admitted.

“Ho ho ho! If you’re this nervous now, you might just keel over on the day!” Giuseppe’s mirthful expression abruptly became serious. “Sorry, son-in-law. This all may be an inconvenience for you, but please think of it as a request from an old man whose days are numbered.”

“Old? Come on, Giuseppe, you’re still full of energy!”

“Not so much, my boy. I’ve lived long enough. And it’s a blessing for the old to pass before the young—it’s proof of a happy life.”

““Father dies, son dies, grandson dies,”” Tatsumi mused.

“What’s that now?”

“It’s from a story I heard once in Japan. Honestly, it might be a regional folk tale... I only remember bits and pieces, but basically that phrase is meant to be a blessing, since it’s likely each person lived a full and healthy life if the older generation passed away first.”

Giuseppe nodded thoughtfully after hearing Tatsumi’s explanation. “Hmm, that sounds like a deeply profound story. You should tell me hear more about it when we have the time.”

“By the way... I haven’t told Chiko about the plan, but would you mind if I mention it to some acquaintances of ours?” Tatsumi asked.

“Actually, since you seem to have broadened your circle of friends recently, I think it would be delightful if you gathered them all together for our grand event,” Giuseppe said in a playful yet serious tone. “You may tell all those you trust, but ensure it remains a secret, will you? Only inform those who can keep their lips sealed.”

“Yes, I’ll make sure to only inform those who aren’t likely to spill the beans,” Tatsumi assured him.

To an outsider, their conversation might have sounded like they were plotting something sinister, but Tatsumi’s slightly embarrassed demeanor indicated that

their schemes were intended to bring joy to others rather than harm.

Thus, word of Giuseppe's happy mischief began to spread among Tatsumi's acquaintances—excluding those few deemed too loose-lipped—and a quiet excitement began to build.

At last, the much-anticipated New Year's festival, marking the beginning of a new year, finally commenced.



## Chapter 11: The New Year's Festival

“In the name of King Balraide Rezo Largofiery, I hereby declare the commencement of a new year! Let the New Year's festival begin!”

The proclamation carried from the balcony where the king stood across the crowded palace courtyard filled with nobles and commoners alike, marking the official start of the new year's festivities. Servants stepped into the courtyard, immediately starting to hand out food and drink to those that had gathered.

It was tradition for certain parts of the palace to be open to the public for the duration of the festival, allowing commoners to tour areas of the royal residence they would never normally be allowed to enter. Soldiers and knights wearing ceremonial armor and weapons guarded the sections that remained off-limits, watching over the guests who were wandering around with awed faces.

The formidable appearance of the knights was particularly popular among the children. Young boys gazed up at them with sparkling eyes, and the knights, despite their stern demeanor, seemed flattered by the attention. Meanwhile, other festival-goers, already tipsy from the freely flowing wine, attempted to haphazardly make their way into restricted areas, only to be promptly escorted out—it was a scene that had become an expected part of the festivities.

Outside the palace, the entire city of Levantis was also in high spirits. The sounds of clinking glasses filled the streets, while musicians and acrobats competed to showcase their talents. In the marketplace, vendors busied themselves with attracting customers to their stalls, which were brimming with their finest wares. Even the nobility, who typically sent servants to shop for

them or summoned merchants to their homes, were mingling with the common folk and eagerly perusing the goods laid out by the traders.

Unsurprisingly, the festive atmosphere inevitably led to an increase in petty crimes like pickpocketing and shoplifting. To ensure the safety of all attendees, stern-faced armored guards and warrior priests from various temples vigilantly patrolled the lively streets and kept an eye on the celebrating crowds. The presence of these protectors added a layer of security to the vibrant celebration, allowing everyone to freely enjoy the New Year's festival without fear.

Tatsumi, as part of his duties as a warrior priest of Savaiv Temple, was armed and patrolling the lively streets as well. He couldn't help but marvel at the celebratory atmosphere.

"So, this is what a festival in this country is like..." he mused aloud as he took in the boisterous excitement filling the air. It was evident that everyone was thoroughly enjoying the festivities.

The joy of taking part in events like these, Tatsumi noted, remained unchanged even in this otherworldly realm. It made him feel more at home in the city, though he didn't allow himself to be any less vigilant as he patrolled. It was his duty to maintain order, so he couldn't afford to get distracted to the point where he wasn't noticing ongoing criminal activity.

Still, the festival's vibrant atmosphere was infectious, and even Tatsumi found it hard to suppress his rising spirits.

Just then, his companion on patrol, Barse, spoke up. "Really, Giuseppe sure knows how to come up with some outrageous requests," he said in an exasperated tone. "Did you end up accepting?"

"Well... I had no other choice, really," Tatsumi replied. Given that Giuseppe was not only his mentor but also someone he considered family, Tatsumi felt compelled to agree to almost anything he asked, short of something extreme.

Anyway, though the easy request hadn't been an easy one to agree to, Giuseppe's plan represented a path Tatsumi would eventually have to traverse. *Might as well take this opportunity,* he'd thought.

“It’s a crazy ask, but... I don’t really mind,” Tatsumi admitted.

“Heh, well there you go! Get on with it already!” Barse ordered playfully, giving Tatsumi a—slightly too hard—elbow to the ribs.



As Tatsumi and Barse continued their conversation, they fine-tuned their strategy for keeping Giuseppe's plan under wraps, emphasizing the importance of secrecy given the sensitive nature of the scheme.

"So, about what we discussed earlier..." Tatsumi cautiously began, still wrestling with the implications of their plan.

"Yeah, I got it. I was planning to watch the jousting finals, but this seems more intriguing. But how should I explain it to Nanu?" Barse pondered aloud, considering the predicament of keeping his girlfriend in the dark.

"Maybe it's better not to tell Nanu? Tatsumi suggested, recalling Nanu's tendency to share news a bit too freely. "She can be quite chatty,"

"That's probably wise," Barse agreed. "She's surprisingly talkative, and considering the nature of what we're planning... As a woman, she might get carried away with excitement and let something slip."

"What about Mirial? Should I keep it from her too?" Tatsumi pictured his fellow monster-hunting comrade.

"Hmm, I don't know her well enough to judge. It's really up to you, Tatsumi," Barse replied. He had met Mirial through Tatsumi and had occasionally run into her at the Elf's Repose Inn where Nanu worked, but their relationship hadn't developed beyond basic familiarity.

"There's a chance Mirial could pass it along to Nanu..." Tatsumi mused, weighing the risks. He didn't think Mirial was really one for gossip, but the content in question was sensitive, and fewer people knowing was definitely safer.

"True. If we want to keep it a secret, it might be better not to tell them," Barse suggested.

"All right, it's unfortunate, but let's keep Mirial out of the loop. I'll have Jardock bring her to the venue on the day of," Tatsumi decided, internally apologizing to Mirial for keeping her in the dark.

"As for the others... Maybe we should keep it quiet from Niizu and his brothers too? Sago seems like he can keep a secret, but Shiro is definitely a



blabbermouth.”

“Yeah, I agree with that,” Tatsumi quickly concurred. This time the decision wasn’t hard at all.

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The busiest area of the New Year’s festival was undoubtedly the first aid stations that had been set up in the courtyards of each of Levantis’s temples. Swept up in the festivities, people overindulged in alcohol, and trivial disputes escalated into brawls. There were also injuries from the jousting tournament and the gish competition, along with children who had gotten lost. And the resolution of every single one of these issues ended up happening at the first aid stations. For the priests, the place truly resembled a battlefield.

Calsedonia was in a corner of one portion of said battlefield, diligently treating the injured. “There, you should be fine now,” she told her patient. “But please, even if it’s the festival, try not to fight over trivial things.”

The middle-aged man, who had been brought to the Savaiv Temple’s first aid station after getting involved in a brawl while intoxicated, sheepishly nodded. “Well, I might have gotten carried away... But if I could be treated by the famed Saintess every time I got injured, I’d never stop getting into fights!” He laughed heartily.

Calsedonia sighed and gave a forceful tap to the man’s cheek, which she had just finished treating by applying an anesthetic ointment. “Ow, ow, ow!” the man yelped, clutching at the spot where he appeared to have been slapped.

“Don’t get ahead of yourself,” Calsedonia warned.

“Oh, all right, all right. But you’re quite stern, Saintess. Aren’t you worried your fiancé might disapprove?”

Rumors of the Saintess being engaged to a foreign young man with black hair and black eyes had apparently spread throughout the capital. It seemed that this middle-aged man had also heard them.

“Don’t worry. My master and I get along very well,” Calsedonia reassured him with a bright smile.

The man was visibly charmed by her happy expression and let out a defeated chuckle. “Well, I’m beaten. Never thought I’d be openly bragged to about love.”

Soon after, the man bid Calsedonia farewell and left the first aid station with sure steps. Watching him go, Calsedonia felt confident that he was fully recovered. She was about to move on to her next patient when an elderly female priest approached her.

“Lady Calsedonia, you should rest for a while,” suggested the elderly priest. “I’ll take over here for now.”

“If you think so, then I will take your kind offer,” Calsedonia replied, stepping aside. Following the priest’s recommendation, she headed to the temple’s rest area.

“Oh, Lady Calsedonia, thank you for your hard work,” said a young priestess with fluffy chestnut hair and grayish-blue eyes.

“Ah, Calsedonia, are you taking a break too?” added another priestess. She was slightly older than Calsedonia, with smoky-gold hair and scorched-brown eyes.

Recognizing both familiar faces, Calsedonia approached the women with a smile. “Oh, Curie and Lorraine. Are you two on break as well?”

Curie and Lorraine were among the few friends Calsedonia had. Lorraine was a peer of Calsedonia’s and had always looked out for her like an older sister, while Curie was one of Calsedonia’s subordinates. Calsedonia had previously entrusted the young girl with delivering messages to Tatsumi.

As for the rest area, it was just a tent set up in a corner of the temple courtyard. It was spacious but sparsely furnished, with just a few chairs and tables. Curie and Lorraine were sitting directly on mats laid on the ground, so Calsedonia joined them.

Curie brewed some tea and offered a warm, fragrant cup to Calsedonia. She seemed experienced in handling such tasks. “Are you all right with being here, Lady Calsedonia?” she asked, her tone mixed with gratitude and concern. “I thought this was your day off work.”

“Yes, we’re really grateful for your help, but aren’t you supposed to be enjoying the festival with your fiancé? Tatsumi, is it?” inquired Lorraine.

“I don’t mind being here,” Calsedonia replied with a cheerful smile. “After all, my master has work this afternoon, and there’s no point in staying home alone. Besides, we’re planning to enjoy the festival together in the evening after he’s done for the day.”

Seeing how happy Calsedonia was, Lorraine and Curie exchanged glances. Although they’d had a few interactions with Tatsumi, they weren’t close to him. Judging by Calsedonia’s feelings, however, they could tell he was head over heels for her.

“Things really have changed for her, haven’t they?” murmured Curie.

“Truly, they have. She never used to smile so naturally before. To see her so casually love-struck... it’s almost annoying. Who would have thought we’d see the day when Calsedonia would be the one gushing about a man?” Lorraine asked with a soft chuckle.

Easily recognizing the friendly teasing in Lorraine’s tone, Calsedonia brushed off the girl’s comments with a giggle. “A patient just a bit ago said something similar to me when they visited the temple,” she told them.

“Oh, really?” Lorraine asked, shrugging with feigned exasperation. “If you’re going to gush so much, why not move past the engagement and just get married already?”

“Huh...? M-Married?”

Imagining herself married to Tatsumi, Calsedonia’s face instantly turned bright red.

“You’ve been living together for over a year,” Lorraine pointed out with a sigh. “Why are you blushing like that now?”

“But... Well, when you put it like that, getting married is...” Calsedonia trailed off, mortified.

“So, you don’t want to marry Tatsumi?” Lorraine prodded playfully.

“I do want to get married! Very much so!” Calsedonia replied fervently, her face still a shade of deep red. She clenched her fists in affirmation.



## Chapter 12: Preparations Underway

**O**n the afternoon of the second day of the New Year's festival, Tatsumi and Calsedonia found themselves at the royal palace's training grounds. That day, the grounds were hosting the qualifying matches for the jousting tournament. Even now, knights clad in glittering armor and wielding lances charged at each other at a fierce velocity, their figures a blur in Tatsumi and Calsedonia's eyes.

The jousting match involved mounted knights charging each other head-on and attempting to unseat each other with lances at the moment of their high-speed crossing. It was a true test of skill and nerve.

A similar practice had once existed on Earth, though naturally, there were several differences. The most notable was the type of mount the knights rode—not horses, but a creature resembling a humongous ostrich, known locally as a parlow.

“Why do they all have the coloring of sparrows, I wonder?” Tatsumi had mused aloud upon his first sight of one. Their feathers, a mix of white, brown, and spots of black, did indeed remind one of sparrows, though these birds carried a more formidable presence.

Parlows were fast and had excellent stamina, but they lacked the strength to pull anything of significant weight, which was why Largofiery had opted to have their carriages pulled by boar-like creatures known as orcs instead. In Japan, the term “orc” had typically conjured images of pig-like humanoids from fantasy novels, but in this world, it referred to a domesticated magical beast resembling a boar.

Apparently, while wild cattle and horses existed in Largofiery, the people here rarely used them as livestock. Instead, parlows and orcs had been domesticated

and were now commonly employed in various sectors, serving essential roles in the sectors of transportation and agriculture. Orcs—notable for their fearsome appearance and profound strength—held particular favor in the kingdom, as they had a mild temperament and bonded easily with humans.

Among the upper nobility, there seemed to be a preference for using horses to draw their carriages over orcs. From what Tatsumi could tell, it seemed like utilizing a horse-drawn carriage was a status symbol equivalent to owning a luxury car in Japan.

Back on the battlefield, the high-pitched clang of metal on metal rang out. One of the dueling knights fell spectacularly from his ornately decorated parlow, then slammed a fist into the ground in frustration. In contrast, the victorious knight removed his helmet to reveal his face, then waved to the crowd, boasting of his win.

The triumphant knight, who was in his mid-twenties and sizeable enough to surpass Tatsumi in both height and weight, epitomized the quintessential image of a knight. He also had the country's trademark burnt umber hair and eyes.

When he went to make his exit, passing near the front of the general spectators' section where Tatsumi and Calsedonia were positioned, Tatsumi recognized him as Sir Gail Utrillo. The two had once gotten into a confrontation on this very training ground, but had since reconciled and become good friends.

Noticing Tatsumi and his company, Gail smiled and steered his parlow towards the spectator stands. "Ah, Tatsumi! You came to watch?"

"You won, Sir Gail! Congratulations!"

"I've managed to smoothly make it to tomorrow's final. I hope you can come and watch then too."

"Ah, tomorrow... Well, tomorrow is..." Tatsumi faltered, glancing at Calsedonia next to him.

Observing this, Gail tilted his head, puzzled by his friend's hesitation.

"I have some duties at the temple tomorrow... But I also want to see the finals of the jousting tournament," said Tatsumi apologetically.

“That’s understandable, you being a priest and all. But I promise I’ll win! You’ll owe me a drink then, okay?” Gail responded enthusiastically.

“All right, I’ll treat you to some fine liquor. Just make sure you win,” Tatsumi replied, encouraging him.

“Leave it to me!”

With a hearty laugh and a wave, Gail left the training grounds. As he disappeared from view, Tatsumi turned his attention back to the tournament. However, he found his gaze irresistibly drawn to the woman sitting next to him. Tatsumi wasn’t the only one enchanted; most of the young men sitting around them were too captivated by Calsedonia to pay attention to the jousting.

The air, fresh with spring—referred to as the Oceanic Season in this land—gently stirred Calsedonia’s silvery hair. It seemed to Tatsumi as if her aura was dancing with light. The brightness of the sun’s rays only accentuated her beauty, making her seem even more radiant than usual. What struck Tatsumi most were her eyes, red as rubies, sparkling intensely under the gentle light. Being with such a woman made him feel proud yet bashful.

Lost in these thoughts, Tatsumi unexpectedly met Calsedonia’s gaze.

“Is something the matter?” she inquired.

“N-No, it’s nothing!” he stammered.

He hastily turned his attention back to the tournament, but in truth, he could barely focus. His thoughts were dominated by the trick Giuseppe had planned for the next day. The thought of it filled him with such anxiety that it felt like his stomach might grow a pile of ulcers. If the plan failed, he’d be facing utter humiliation.

Tatsumi had never imagined that something might go wrong with Calsedonia as his partner. Yet, he couldn’t help but occasionally fear the worst-case scenario. Still, underneath the veneer of worry, there was undeniably a part of him that was filled with anticipation.

His thoughts filled with what was to come, Tatsumi let out a deep sigh.

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After watching the jousting tournament, Tatsumi and Calsedonia strolled through the festive streets, snuggled together. They admired the talents of minstrels and acrobats at the street corners and tossed them silver coins in appreciation, savored delicacies from food stalls, and enjoyed fruit wines at a random shop, freely indulging in the festival's offerings. It was only as dusk approached that the pair finally headed home.

In the kingdom of Largofiery, where there was no electricity, dusk typically signaled the end of the day. Except for the entertainment districts, the lack of adequate night lighting meant people usually retired early. During the New Year's festival, however, things were different. Throughout the festival, bonfires were lit across the city, and the revelry continued into the night. Even after the pair returned home, the noises of those enjoying the festival unceasingly drifted in from outside.

"It feels like it's been a while since we've experienced such a lively night," Tatsumi remarked, recalling his days back in Japan. Shops had been open around the clock, and the streetlights had never gone out, creating a town that truly never slept.

"Yes, I remember," Calsedonia replied, standing beside Tatsumi and resting her head gently on his shoulder as they looked out the window. "The town where we once lived together was indeed lively, even at night..."

She could vaguely remember the sound of cars revving as they passed by in the night, the way the bright lights had made it feel like day even in the middle of the night, and the lively television programs that'd broadcasted once the sun went down. Occasionally, there'd been the sirens of police cars, ambulances, and fire engines, which she'd found almost too loud, even as a cockatiel.

Remembering their life together in Japan, the pair of lovers held hands tightly and snuggled close together as they gazed out at a city that had no intention of going to sleep.

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The next morning marked the final day of the New Year's festival. That knowledge had the town bustling even very early in the morning, and after finishing the breakfast that Calsedonia had prepared for him, Tatsumi immediately made preparations to leave home and head to the temple to take up his morning shift as a guard.

"I'll be going then," he called to Calsedonia with a wave.

"Good luck with your duties," she called back. "I'll make lunch, so let's meet at our usual spot in the temple at noon."

With that, Tatsumi set off for the temple. But midway there, he veered off the path and headed in the opposite direction of his destination, moving further away from the temple with determined steps. Soon, he'd arrived at a familiar inn. Next to its entrance, a sign hung, still boldly lettered in Japanese, that read "Elf's Repose Inn."

With a tense expression, Tatsumi went inside. He immediately spotted the innkeeper, Elle, behind the counter, and approached her.

"Ah, Tatsumi, welcome," she said, greeting him with her normal warm smile. "I've been waiting for you."

Elle briefly disappeared into the back, only to return promptly while carrying something in her arms.

"Here is the costume I had made. Really, it's quite impressive—I got it from a clothier recommended by the High Priest and Lady Elysia. To think they could recreate the illusion I showed them so faithfully!"

Elle unfolded the garments, revealing designs unlike anything commonly seen in the Kingdom of Largofiery. However, for Tatsumi, they were somewhat familiar—he'd seen outfits like these on television back in Japan. He'd never worn anything like them, however.

"The outfit for Calsedonia was crafted by seamstresses who frequent the Quart ducal house," Elle added.

"Thank you, Elle. You've really helped me out a lot this time," Tatsumi responded gratefully.

“No need to thank me,” she replied with a smile. “Oh, and while I’ll have the costumes delivered to the Savaiv Temple, I need you to personally take this.”

She handed him a small box about the size of his palm. This, too, had been custom-made by one of her favorite craftsmen, and was immediately recognizable to both Tatsumi and Elle. Elle’s late husband had used one once.

“After the ceremony, we’ll have a gathering here at the inn,” Elle reminded Tatsumi. “You can look forward to that.”

“A second party, huh?” Tatsumi laughed nervously, pressing a hand to his stomach. “Now I feel even more pressure...”

Elle chuckled softly. “Come to think of it, Yasutaka said something similar on the morning of our ceremony.” As she reminisced, a nostalgic smile spread across her face.

After repeatedly bowing in thanks to Elle, Tatsumi left the Elf’s Repose Inn to head back to the temple. Elle watched his back as he exited through the front door.

“Is this what it feels like to send off a grown-up son?” she murmured to no one in particular.

Elle, who had never had children with her husband or at any other time in her two-hundred-year life, had never had a chance to experience such an emotion. Silently, she expressed her gratitude to Tatsumi for allowing her to feel a glimpse of what it was like to be a mother, even if just a small one.



## Chapter 13: The Proposal

It was the afternoon of the final day of the New Year's festival, and Savaiv Temple's chapel was overflowing with parents cradling newborns.

In the Kingdom of Largofiery, the infant mortality rate was unfortunately quite high. Unlike in modern Japan, where almost every premature infant could grow up safely, the reality in the kingdom was quite different. As such, parents hoping for their children to grow up healthy considered praying daily to the Savaiv an act of the utmost importance. Naturally, knowing that today the High Priest of the Savaiv Temple would be imparting his god's blessing upon everyone in attendance, nobles and commoners alike, many people had been drawn to the chapel. This included not only parents with their babies but also pregnant women, their bellies round with child.

The ceremony itself didn't involve any magic; the High Priest would simply pray for each child's healthy growth and bestows Savaiv's blessing on them personally. Nevertheless, there were few parents who would turn such a chance down.

Eventually, High Priest Giuseppe Chrysopraxe made his appearance in the chapel. He was dressed in a lavish ceremonial robe adorned with gold and silver threads, carrying a ceremonial staff that signified his rank, and his presence exuded dignity and authority. The sight of him, rarely seen among the populace, naturally made the assembled crowd fall silent and bow deeply.

Following behind Giuseppe were several other priests also dressed in ceremonial robes. Among them was the famed Saintess of the Savaiv Temple, which made the people feel as if they'd receive an even greater blessing than was typical from today's ceremony.

Giuseppe ascended to the pulpit in the chapel and announced the start of the ceremony in a resonant voice. As it proceeded solemnly, Calsedonia covertly surveyed the room. She could see several armed priests throughout the chapel, which was not unusual, given that their leader was present.

Surprisingly, Calsedonia could not find Tatsumi among the assembled priests. It seemed a bit curious to her, since when they'd had lunch together earlier, Tatsumi had mentioned that Giuseppe had requested his help for this ceremony. Thus, Calsedonia had assumed that Tatsumi would be deployed for security. But it appeared that he hadn't—where was he?

Even during the ceremony, Calsedonia's eyes involuntarily searched for Tatsumi. As her gaze wandered distractedly around the chapel, an older priest next to her cleared his throat in warning.

She hurriedly tried to refocus on the ceremony. However, that attempt failed, as she spotted someone among the crowd who shouldn't have been there.

"Ah, Calsey seems to have noticed us," Jardock whispered. With the aid of her keen eyesight, she'd seen Calsedonia's eyes widen as she stood on the pulpit. "Hee hee, she looks shocked. *Really* shocked. She has that 'Why are you here?' look on her face."

"You know, Jardock, I can't help but wonder why you're here as well," Mirial retorted, pursing her lips as she glanced around.

Naturally, the chapel was crowded with couples cradling infants. Frankly, as unmarried individuals without children, Mirial and Jardock were quite out of place. Unsurprisingly, they were getting the occasional puzzled look from the people around them.

"Could it be that Calsedonia thinks I'm pregnant or something?" Mirial muttered to herself, considering the possibility quite seriously. "Anyway, why did you drag me here, Jardock? Aren't you going to tell me the reason anytime soon?"

"Actually, Tatsumi asked us to come to this ceremony," Jardock explained.

"He did? But why? Do you know?"

“Yes, indeed I do,” Jardock replied, winking one of her four eyes skillfully. “But it’s a secret for now. You’ll find out soon enough, just wait a bit.”

Just then, a familiar voice called out from behind them: “Oh! Jardock and Mirial?! What are you two doing here?”

Turning around, they saw Nanu from the Elf’s Repose Inn and her boyfriend, Barse.

“Hey, you two... Are you here because...?” Mirial’s gaze drifted towards Nanu’s abdomen, her eyes asking her question so clearly it didn’t need to be voiced.

“No, that’s not it. We were also invited here by Tatsumi,” Barse clarified.

“Huh? You guys too?”

Barse and Jardock exchanged knowing smiles, then nodded at one another. Nanu and Mirial, still in the dark, could only look at each other with puzzled expressions.

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In another spot in the chapel, Gioltrion turned to Gail with a worried look. The knight was casually dressed and wore a sword at his waist, but he seemed restless, frequently touching the spot on his face where a patch soaked in ointment covered a wound.

“Are you okay, Gail? That was a pretty serious injury, wasn’t it?” Gioltrion asked.

“Well... Yes, Your Highness. I received treatment from a priest at the tournament site, so I’m fine now.”

“Then why are you so uneasy?”

“It’s just that...” Gail trailed off, feeling awkward. After having boasted so pridefully to Tatsumi the day before that he’d win the jousting tournament, he’d lost in the very first match. It was embarrassing to think about facing him.

“You know what’s about to happen, right?” Gioltrion asked, shifting the topic.

“Yes. I was informed by Captain Taurod.”

“Then we need to make sure we watch the whole thing. It’s a big moment for Tatsumi.”

“Indeed. I may have lost in the jousting tournament, but the challenge Tatsumi is about to face is an entirely different matter.”

“Well, whatever the outcome, it’ll be quite consequential. But I think it’s pretty clear what she’ll say already,” Gioltrion remarked with a chuckle.

“Yes, it sure is,” Gail agreed, smiling back.

Unbeknownst to the cheerful duo, they stood out starkly in the chapel filled primarily with couples with children and pregnant women. Nearby mothers whispered, speculating about the relationship between the two young men, but fortunately for Gioltrion and Gail, they remained oblivious to these murmurs. It was probably for the best.

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“Let the grace of Savaiv illuminate the future of this child,” Giuseppe murmured as he touched the forehead of a baby cradled in its mother’s arms. His fingertips were dipped in consecrated water, which was used to bestow the divine blessing.

This child was the last to be blessed today, and once the High Priest had finished, the parents happily began preparing to leave the chapel. However, just as the ceremony concluded, Giuseppe began to speak again, causing everyone in the crowded chapel to halt in their tracks.

“While today’s ceremony has concluded, there is actually a small event still to come. Those of you who can spare the time, please stay here a little longer.”

Unable to ignore the words of the High Priest, the families lingered in the chapel, whispering among themselves with curiosity. And they weren’t the only ones surprised—the priests standing behind Giuseppe were astir as well.

“Hey, did His Eminence mention anything about this plan to you?”

“No, I haven’t heard anything...”

“Calsedonia, what about you?”

Calsedonia, holding a small metal jar filled with consecrated water, shook her head in response to the inquiry. “No, Grandfather hasn’t told me anything either...” she admitted.

“As everyone knows,” Giuseppe said, his voice filling every corner of the chapel thanks to a priest’s wind magic, “Savaiv is not only a deity of fertility and children but also a protector of marriages. Today, a young man has made a request. He has someone very important to him, and he wishes to convey something significant to her, right here in this place. As the High Priest of Savaiv, I have decided to support this young man in his endeavor. And so... Calsedonia Chrysoprase,” Giuseppe called out.

“Y-Yes!” Calsedonia replied, nearly jumping in surprise at hearing her name so unexpectedly.

“Come here.”

Giuseppe gestured for her to come to his side, and Calsedonia, still not fully understanding what was happening, walked over still holding the jar of consecrated water, a clear sign of her confusion.

“Now... Perhaps it’s time to call that young man up here,” Giuseppe signaled, and at his command, the temple guards by the entrance opened the chapel doors.

All eyes—parents with their children, staff of the Savaiv Temple, and the few who knew what was about to unfold—turned toward who lay beyond. And there, standing in the doorway, was a young man dressed in an unfamiliar white outfit, his face was strikingly red.

Of course, it was Tatsumi. Recognizing him, Calsedonia could only stare in astonishment.

“What? M-Master...?”

In his suit—unlike any those in the chapel had seen before—Tatsumi stepped towards the altar where Giuseppe and Calsedonia stood. As he moved forward, the crowd parted to create a path for him.

Along the way, familiar faces gave him thumbs up, others mouthed words of encouragement, and some just stared in disbelief. Tatsumi nodded in response, his gesture showing his firm resolve.

When he finally reached the altar, Tatsumi stopped before the most significant person in his life, face still flushed with emotion. Still baffled, Calsedonia stared at him.

“Um... Master? What... what is all this about?”

In the midst of the hushed crowd, Tatsumi released the words that would determine his destiny. His face flushed red, yet his gaze pierced straight into Calsedonia’s ruby-red eyes.

“Ch-Chiko... I mean, Calsedonia Chrysopraxe! Will you marry me right here, right now?!”

*Ting!*

The metallic sound echoed through the room. It was the sound of the small metal vessel in Calsedonia’s hands, filled with consecrated water, hitting the floor of the chapel.





## Chapter 14: A Blissful Curse

**F**ollowing the metallic sound, a loud cheer erupted from the gathered crowd. Tatsumi's proposal had been carried across the entire room by Wind magic, just like Giuseppe's voice had been. Thus, everyone assembled in the chapel understood what Tatsumi had said to Calsedonia.

However, the cheer wasn't just because Tatsumi had proposed. It was Calsedonia's reaction to Tatsumi's proposal that really set the crowd off.

*"Will you marry me right here, right now?!"*

The moment Tatsumi had said those words, Calsedonia had dropped—or rather, thrown away—the metal vessel she was holding and leapt into his arms without a moment's hesitation. And there, with her forehead pressed against his chest, she'd nodded silently, tears streaming down her face.

Naturally, there was no need for words. It was clear to all present what Calsedonia's actions meant: The Saintess had accepted the proposal of a young man from another land. This fact alone prompted the crowd to erupt in cheers.

On the altar, under the watchful eyes of Giuseppe, the High Priest of the god of marriage and fertility, the two clung closely together.

Seeing that Calsedonia had calmed down a bit, Tatsumi gently pulled back from her a little. "I haven't been here long and am not well-versed in the marriage customs here, so, um... I wanted to follow along with the traditions in my country. Of course, I have already obtained Giuseppe's approval."

When Calsedonia looked toward her grandfather for confirmation, Giuseppe nodded gently, giving his blessing.

In truth, weddings in Largofiery were quite modest. When Tatsumi had described a Japanese wedding ceremony to Giuseppe, he'd shown great interest. Giuseppe had probably been considering conducting one such ceremony someday ever since in hopes of establishing the tradition in his own country. Knowing Giuseppe's love of grandiose events, Tatsumi could understand why.

That said, Tatsumi hadn't exactly been interested in him and Calsedonia's wedding being Giuseppe's test case. Honestly, he'd had mixed feelings about it. But seeing how happy Calsedonia was right now, he was willing to endure a bit of embarrassment.

As Tatsumi contemplated how he'd gotten to this moment, two elderly female priests approached them. "As this young man mentioned earlier," said one, "the matrimonial ceremony we are about to conduct will follow the customs of his homeland. Since Calsedonia will be marrying into Tatsumi's family, it's natural for her to follow the customs of her new home."

"The bride will now step off the stage to go and get ready. It always takes time for women to prepare, so I'd appreciate your patience," Giuseppe joked to the crowd, eliciting laughter.

And so Calsedonia, her face still streaked with tears, was escorted out of the chapel by the two elderly priests to prepare herself for the ceremony.

Technically, what Calsedonia was doing might not be called a costume change in Japanese terms, but it was close enough, and Tatsumi thought there was no need to stick too rigidly to reproducing a Japanese ceremony. After all, he wasn't particularly knowledgeable about wedding procedures himself, as he'd only reached high school age before being brought to this world, and had had few occasions to attend weddings due to his lack of family.

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After a short wait, the ceremony continued.

When the doors of the chapel reopened, the assembled people involuntarily gasped. A woman clad in an all-white dress of unfamiliar design was standing

there. The neckline was deep, emphasizing her ample bosom without any vulgarity, and the draped skirt—stretching from her slim waist down to her feet and adorned with lace—expanded in a gentle slope. Jewels and beaded flowers had been sewn into the fabric sporadically, making the dress sparkle under the magic lights scattered throughout the chapel.

Calsedonia's platinum blonde hair had been intricately tied up, and was adorned by a lace veil. She also wore lace gloves that reached to above her elbows, and in her hands, she held a bouquet.

The people in the chapel were struck dumb by the bride's attire, having never seen a wedding dress of this sort before. In the Kingdom of Largofiery, there were no traditions that came even close—while formal attire was worn during matrimonial rites, there were no specific expectations about its design.

The Largofiery version of a wedding was quite simple: the couple would make their wedding vows before the gods, then exchange earrings as a sign of their union. These earrings would be placed on the opposite ear as the one they'd adorned during the couple's engagement, signifying to all their deepened relationship. Then, after the ceremony, it was customary to celebrate with family and friends at home or in a tavern.

In contrast, in Japan, the actual wedding ceremony was held at a shrine and was quite brief, with the reception being more elaborate.

The honor of escorting the bride to the altar ended up falling to Calsedonia's brother-in-law, Taurod, who'd worn formal dress attire for the occasion. Normally, the role would have fallen to Giuseppe as her adoptive father, but since he was officiating the ceremony, he'd chosen to pass the duty on to his son instead.

Her face downcast, Calsedonia walked slowly through the chapel with Taurod by her side. As the bride passed by, the gathered crowd could only sigh at her pure-white dress and her radiant beauty.

Eventually, the pair reached the altar, where the Tatsumi was waiting. The groom stared upon his bride, utterly transfixed by her. It was only when Calsedonia tilted her head in confusion at Tatsumi's silence, that he got it together enough to speak.

“Chiko... You really are beautiful,” he said.

“Huh?”

“From the first time I came to this country, from the first time I met you, I thought you were gorgeous. But to see you in a wedding dress like this, and to think such a beautiful woman is my bride... Honestly, I still can’t believe it.”

Receiving such straightforward praise, Calsedonia blushed deeply. “What are you saying?” she asked with a soft smile. “I’ve been yours since the moment I was born... No, even before I was born.”

“Yeah, you’re right. You’ve always been my Chiko,” Tatsumi agreed.

In the hushed chapel, their conversation was the only sound. Tatsumi and Calsedonia were so lost in each other and the moment that they’d completely forgot the words they were exchanging were being carried to every corner of the chapel by a magician skilled in wind magic.

Later, Tatsumi would be mortified when Barse and Jardock told him about this and he realized everyone had heard their intimate exchange. This embarrassment would only deepen when Giuseppe, who had secretly recorded the scene with a magical device, presented it to them as a wedding gift. It would cause Tatsumi to cringe all over again when he watched it.

Furthermore, the entire event would end up immortalized by minstrels and actors in a play that would be passed down through the ages titled *The Saintess’s Marriage*, with this particular moment becoming the most famous scene.

The wedding ceremony proceeded smoothly. Giuseppe’s lines, though slightly different than those spoken at a Japanese wedding, were mostly familiar thanks to the planning he’d done with Tatsumi and Elle. Elle had proven invaluable in this regard, since she’d been to more weddings than Tatsumi and had put on a wedding herself.

Soon, the ceremony reached its climax. In a traditional Largofiery wedding, this would have been when the bride and groom exchanged earrings, but Tatsumi had planned for something else instead. He faced Calsedonia and

pulled a small, velvet-lined box from his pocket, then opened it and revealed its contents to his bride.

“Rings?” Calsedonia inquired.

Indeed, inside the box were two rings of identical design, but which had been made in different sizes. They were made of platinum, simple and unadorned. They’d been made in the fashion of wedding bands, which typically didn’t bear any gemstones or only had small ones embedded into the metal of the ring. That way, both he and Calsedonia could wear them every day without having to worry about protruding gemstones getting in the way during their work.

“Yes. In my country, wearing a ring on the fourth finger of the left hand indicates you are married,” Tatsumi explained.

“Now, Chiko, please give me your left hand,” Tatsumi requested.

Calsedonia hesitantly extended her left hand toward Tatsumi, who gently took it. He carefully slid the smaller of the two rings onto her slender finger. There was no issue with size; Tatsumi had made sure there wouldn’t be well in advance.

When the platinum ring at the base of her finger caught the light, Calsedonia couldn’t help but be mesmerized by its sparkle.

“Chiko... could you put my ring on me?” Tatsumi asked.

“Yes, of course,” Calsedonia responded. She took the larger ring and slid it onto the fourth finger of Tatsumi’s left hand. Seeing the matching designs on their rings glitter, a joy beyond words welled up in her heart.

“You know, Chiko... this is actually a curse,” Tatsumi said.

“A curse?” Calsedonia echoed, puzzled.

“Yes. Now you can’t escape from me, and I have no intention of ever letting you go. Basically... you’ve just been cursed to stay with me forever.”

Initially stunned, Calsedonia soon realized what Tatsumi meant and tears welled up in her ruby-like eyes again. But they were not tears of sadness.

“If it’s such a blissful curse, then I shall gladly accept it. But I’m placing the same curse on you too, Master.”

“Ah, I don’t mind. If you’re the one cursing me, then I’ll gladly accept it.”

In an instant, they moved closer together, and their lips met.

Giuseppe, who had been quietly observing their exchange, then proclaimed to the audience, “With this, these two are now wed! This union is blessed by Savaiv, and their bond shall never be broken! Let us bless this young couple once again!”

As Giuseppe finished speaking, the bells of the Savaiv Temple rang out with a solemn tone, and the people watching erupted with cheers and applause.

In this way, surrounded by the blessings of many, Tatsumi and Calsedonia became husband and wife. Though their lips parted, they continued to cling to one another under the watchful gaze of Savaiv’s statue. On this particular day, the usually expressionless figure seemed to wear a gentle look, a detail that attendees would later recount to one another.



A decorative rectangular border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a light gray color. The border frames the chapter title.

## Chapter 15: A Dream Come True

**A**fter the successful conclusion of Tatsumi and Calsedonia's wedding, the newlyweds exited the chapel, and the assembled guests split in half to form an aisle for them to pass through.

Arm in arm, Tatsumi and Calsedonia slowly walked toward the exit, their path marked by cheers and applause from the celebratory crowd. Among those at the forefront were their acquaintances and friends.

Spotting the goblin woman next to Barse, whose eyes were sparkling as she admired Calsedonia, Tatsumi whispered something in Calsedonia's ear. With a bright smile, she gently pulled away and headed toward Nanu, causing a stir of whispers among the onlookers.

"Huh...? Lady Calsedonia...?" Nanu murmured, blinking repeatedly in confusion.

With a smile, Calsedonia extended what she held in her hand towards her. "Please take this, Nanu."

"Huh? Um, what is this?"

"In my husband's country, it's called a bouquet," Calsedonia explained. "It is said that the person who receives the bride's bouquet will be the next to marry. So, this is for you, Nanu."

Traditionally, a bride's bouquet would be thrown over her shoulder to a group of single women, but in a country like Largofiery that was unfamiliar with such traditions, there seemed no need to adhere strictly to the custom. Thus, based on Tatsumi's suggestion, Calsedonia had presented the bouquet directly to Nanu.



“Thank you so much!” Nanu said, beaming at Barse as she clutched the bouquet tight.

Barse thanked Calsedonia and then gave Tatsumi a thumbs-up. He returned the gesture.

Shortly after, Calsedonia hurried back and wrapped her arm around Tatsumi’s once more and the couple left the chapel. Outside, a carriage awaited them—and not just any carriage, but one reminiscent of an open-topped car, with no roof at all. To their surprise, Elle was seated in the driver’s position, dressed incongruously in butler’s attire.

“Elle? What’s going on with this carriage...?” Tatsumi asked, his tone laced with astonishment.

“Lady Elysia specially ordered this carriage for today,” Elle explained, smiling knowingly. “Please, after you. It will take us to the Elf’s Repose Inn.”

“Um... I have many questions. Elle, do you have experience driving a carriage? And why the butler outfit?” Tatsumi queried, his curiosity piqued by the unusual setup.

Elle stood up and puffed her chest out, then declared, “It may not look it, but I was an adventurer! And who better to play a coachman than a butler, right?”

Tatsumi wasn’t sure where that’d come from, so he could only hypothesize that in Elle’s original world, adventurers had been capable of handling carriage driving. As for the whole butler thing, that seemed to be her own unique fixation.

Elle hopped down from the driver’s seat, swung the carriage door open, and—like a true butler—bowed respectfully to invite Tatsumi and Calsedonia inside. “Please, take your seats. The spotlight’s on you!”

Tatsumi and Calsedonia exchanged glances and chuckled softly at one another. Without needing prompting, they’d both decided to indulge in Elle’s and Elysia’s gracious offer.

Tatsumi climbed into the carriage first, then extended his hand to help Calsedonia in. In modern Japan—or rather, on Earth—it might be customary to let the woman board first, but in this world it was polite for men to board first

and assist women with embarking and disembarking due to the carriage seats being elevated. Thus, with Tatsumi's assistance, Calsedonia managed to climb aboard, carefully minding the hem of her wedding dress.

Once they were both seated, Elle snapped the reins and set the carriage in motion. It rattled gently as it began its journey through the bustling festival-time streets of Levantis.

The ducal-crest-adorned carriage, driven by a beautifully dressed elf in men's attire, could not help but draw attention. The open roof also meant that its passengers were clearly visible to all. The sight of a young man and woman dressed in an unfamiliar style of clothing—they were still wearing their tuxedo and wedding dress—was unusual enough to attract stares. Moreover, those who took a closer look could easily recognize that the woman inside the carriage was the revered Saintess of the Savaiv Temple. The man's distinctive black hair and eyes made it equally easy to deduce that he was the rumored fiancé of the Saintess.

As the carriage slowly made its way through the city, onlookers whispered and pointed, marveling at the scene before them. Before long, someone started spreading the word that the couple in the carriage had just had their wedding ceremony at the Savaiv Temple.

Hearing this, Tatsumi couldn't help but think that Lady Elysia or Giuseppe had a hand in the news getting out so quickly. Knowing them, having someone who was mingling with the crowd spread the news of their marriage was exactly the sort of thing they would do.

"Hey, hey, Tatsumi and Calsedonia, why don't you wave to everyone?" Elle suggested, turning back to them from the coachman's seat.

In that moment, Tatsumi realized something. "Elle... Did you, by any chance, put any ideas in Giuseppe's head?" he asked. It wasn't unusual for post-wedding street parades to occur on Earth, and if Elle had told Giuseppe about them, it would be no surprise if he'd shown interest.

"Hee hee, did you figure it out?"

"I'm neither a celebrity nor part of any royal family, but it seems I was a bigger pawn in Giuseppe's schemes than I thought," Tatsumi said with a

resigned sigh. He'd thought he'd known the entirety of the High Priest's plans, but apparently not. "Well, now that it's come to this, let's just go with it! Come on, Chiko, wave to them."

"Um... like this?" Calsedonia asked, following Tatsumi's instructions and waving to the townsfolk.

Tatsumi nodded, but didn't start waving himself. It might be a bit sly of him to get her to do it alone, but he figured she made for a prettier picture than he would.

As the carriage continued to slowly roll through the town, it drew curious glances from more and more people. Atop the carriage sat the Saintess in an exquisite pure-white dress unlike anything they had ever seen, and when she waved at them with a wordless smile, the people were captivated by her beauty and grace. Upon hearing that she had married the dark-haired, dark-eyed man beside her, they erupted in loud cheers, showering the couple with congratulatory words.

As they continued to receive blessings from the townspeople, Lady Elysia skillfully guided the carriage toward the Elf's Repose Inn.

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On the evening of the final day of the New Year's festival, the town remained lively even as the sun fully set. Neighbors gathered in homes to revel together, and the taverns were bustling with patrons sharing drinks and laughter.

Without feeling the need to exchange words, Tatsumi and Calsedonia walked leisurely through these spirited streets toward their home. Their wedding outfits had been discarded for more comfortable clothing, and Tatsumi's guitar had been left behind at the Elf's Repose Inn for safekeeping.

Calsedonia's clung tightly to Tatsumi's right arm with her left, refusing to let go. The ring that Tatsumi had given her earlier glimmered on her hand, lit up by the light of the bonfires. The matching earrings they'd been wearing since their engagement—now swapped to the opposite ears—mirrored that same shine,

as did the ring on Tatsumi's hand. They'd decided to keep wearing the earrings as yet another symbol of their commitment to each other.

The nighttime breeze stirred the flames lighting the street and carried the murmur of the crowd to Tatsumi and Calsedonia's ears. Yet what filled their hearts the most was each other's warmth.

The celebration at the Elf's Repose Inn had just concluded—there had been a grand, joyous feast held to honor their union, attended by close friends and family. Among the attendees had been Barse, Nanu, Jardock, Mirial, Lorraine, and Curie, as well as Elle, the other staff from the inn, and the monster hunters who frequented the place. The Niizu brothers, who hadn't been able to attend the ceremony due to their security duties, had still made it to the celebration. Gioltrion and Gail had also been there, and they'd thoroughly enjoyed Elle's cooking.

Beyond sincerely celebrating Tatsumi and Calsedonia's marriage, the entertainment had included Lorraine playing an instrument named after her, and at one point, Tatsumi played a tune while Calsedonia and Elle sang a Japanese song, just as they had to shame a certain minstrel in the past.

Incidentally, Lorraine's father was a musician and he'd named his daughter after the musical instrument that was his tool of trade. The lute-playing skills she'd inherited from her father had captivated the hearts of those gathered at the Elf's Repose Inn, and had received a boisterous applause from the beast hunters.

"This isn't all my imagination, right?" Calsedonia asked Tatsumi as they walked. She clung to him, as if afraid that letting go of his hand would cause her to awaken from a blissful dream.

"No, this is reality," Tatsumi confirmed, easily ridding her heart of the small prick of fear she'd been feeling. "You and I, Chiko... we're husband and wife from today onward."

It had been about a year since Tatsumi had been summoned to this world, which meant it'd also been about a year since they'd started living together. As such, marriage wouldn't change their daily lives much, but they could both feel

something different about the way they interacted with one another compared to before the ceremony.

“Well, it seems we were both swept up in Giuseppe’s scheme...” Tatsumi said with a beleaguered sigh.

“Do you have any regrets?”

“Ha ha ha, not at all. I don’t regret a single thing.”

Looking at each other—Calsedonia’s head tilted up, Tatsumi’s tilted down—they both chuckled. Tatsumi had told Calsedonia everything during the celebration at the Elf’s Repose Inn, so she knew now that today’s surprise had been entirely Giuseppe’s idea, though many others—including the young man walking beside her—had played a part in it.

“But really, my grandfather went too far,” Calsedonia added. “He didn’t have to drag us into his extravagant festival plans!”

“It wasn’t so bad. And next year, there might be new couples just like us,” Tatsumi suggested, reflecting on Giuseppe’s plans to continue the event next year.

While proposing in public might be embarrassing, the prospect of receiving a blessing from the High Priest of the Savaiv Temple, regardless of social standing, would likely attract many participants. In Japanese terms, it would be like receiving a luxurious hotel wedding in exchange for some free publicity. Those already planning to get married might want to join, while others might take the opportunity to confess their feelings as long as they weren’t afraid to face rejection. Still others might use the event to make a name for themselves. No matter what, it seemed like there wouldn’t be a lack of interested parties.

Tatsumi wondered what kinds of couples would follow in their footsteps. It was something he found quite exciting to think about. “Maybe Barse and Nanu will take part next year,” he mused.

During the celebration at the Elf’s Repose Inn earlier that day, Barse and Nanu had been relentlessly teased by everyone in attendance. They’d all been certain that the pair would be the next to get married. Though they’d seemed

embarrassed, they'd both seemed genuinely pleased at the well wishing. Thinking of it made Tatsumi smile.

*I wonder if they're still celebrating at the inn,* Tatsumi wondered. Although he and Calsedonia had been the main focus of today's celebration, everyone had encouraged them to head home after a while. It had probably been someone's thoughtful suggestion, though some of the beast hunters had even bluntly told Tatsumi to "Have a good night!" with looks that implied they were referring to more than just rest.

At last, the pair's leisurely walk came to an end, and they stopped in front of their residence.

"We're home," Calsedonia murmured softly, seemingly reluctant for their private time to be over. A slightly melancholic air flowed between them.

Tatsumi gently disentangled his arm from Calsedonia's and draped it over her shoulder, pulling her close. "This isn't just our home—it's where our new lives are about to begin. From today onward, we'll be living as husband and wife."

"Master..." Calsedonia looked up at him, her face covered in a mixture of surprise and affection.

"So, let's try that again. Welcome home, my wife."

Face alight with joy at being called Tatsumi's wife, Calsedonia replied, "Welcome home! I place myself in your hands, my husband."

They leaned forward, quietly stealing a kiss, but just then...

"Ah, you're finally back?" someone shouted. "Look, everyone, Tatsumi and Calsedonia are home!"

Residents from nearby houses emerged, swarming around them. Of course, the couple sprang apart instantly.

"I heard the news!" one of the smiling neighbors said cheerfully. "You two finally made it official, huh?"

"Why didn't you tell us about today's ceremony? We could've prepared a grander celebration!"

"Let's not be too hard on them; they surely have a lot on their plates."

It seemed that the neighbors had caught wind of their wedding and had been preparing to celebrate it.

A well-known local woman took the couple's hands and led them into her house, likely the venue for the next celebration. "Come on over this way," she told them. "Things happened so suddenly we couldn't prepare much, but here's a little something from us to you."

Tatsumi and Calsedonia exchanged glances as they were led away. How many times had they looked at each other like this today? And how many more times would they do so in the future?

With a mix of excitement and apprehension about what lay ahead, Tatsumi and Calsedonia stepped into the venue for their second round of celebration. It appeared it'd be a while longer before the two could have a quiet moment together.



## Extra Side Story: A Certain Prince's Love Story

The first time he'd met her, he'd been only three years old. She, who had been seven at the time, had been brought to see him by his grandfather's friend. He could still remember the way her platinum blonde hair had sparkled and the striking ruby-red of her eyes.

"This young lady's name is Calsedonia," his grandfather's friend had said, gently stroking the girl's head. "I've taken her in as my adopted daughter due to some circumstances. I hope you two get along." He gave the girl a little nudge, and she slowly stepped forward. "Come now, Calsedonia. Why don't you say hello?"

From the girl's tiny lips, a delicate voice had softly spilled out. "Um..." she'd mumbled. "M-My name is Calsedonia Chrysopraxe. Can I call you Gioltrion?"

She slightly tilted her head, and the characteristic curl at the crown of her hair wiggled playfully. The amusing sight made Gioltrion chuckle quietly.

"Yeah, that's fine. In return, can I call you Calsedonia?"

She broke into a dazzling smile, so bright he had to squint his eyes. It was safe to say that had been the moment he had been completely charmed.

Gioltrion's full name was Gioltrion Rezo Largofiery. The little boy that had developed an early crush was in fact the archduke of the Kingdom of Largofiery, and his grandfather was its king.

"Actually, my first love was Calsey," Gioltrion confessed nonchalantly to his friend sitting across from him. With a wide grin, he continued, "How does it feel to know that your wife is your friend's first love?"



“What can I say?” Tatsumi said calmly, keeping his composure despite Gioltrion’s teasing. “That happened back when you were kids, right? I can only find it heartwarming now.”

“Wow, is this the composure of a married man?” Gioltrion remarked with a smile. “You’re so unbothered it’s almost a bit annoying. I thought you’d at least panic a little when you found out Calsedonia was my first love. Booooring.”

“Well, sorry to have let you down,” Tatsumi replied, shrugging his shoulders.

The two men locked gazes, then burst into laughter.

Observing them, Gail didn’t bother to hide his exasperation. “Your Highness, you might be taking your jokes a bit too far.”

“Well, it’s just... Gail, our friend got married, you know? If not now, when would we tease him?”

“I’m not saying you can’t tease him at all,” Gail pointed out. “I’m just asking that you don’t force it.”

Gail’s sensible words made Tatsumi chuckle involuntarily.

Currently, the trio were at Tatsumi’s home in Levantis. The New Year’s festival had ended three days ago, and now that the excitement had completely faded, the city was back to its routine.

“Actually, Calsedonia was supposed to be off from her duties at the temple today, but she was called in suddenly,” Tatsumi explained while serving tea to Gioltrion and Gail, his guest and the latter’s bodyguard.

Gioltrion’s visit had been planned a while back, so Tatsumi and Calsedonia had both arranged to have the day off work. However, earlier that morning, a sudden messenger had appeared from the temple and asked that Calsedonia come in. It had been so out of the blue Tatsumi hadn’t even gotten the chance to find out why she had been summoned.

“Too bad. I would have loved to drink tea brewed by your lovely new wife,” Gioltrion said, going back to teasing Tatsumi again.

“Well, sorry again for not meeting your expectations,” Tatsumi replied, both amused and apologetic. The brazen remarks didn’t upset him at all, a testament

to how secure his relationship with Calsedonia was.

“Hmm, I’m disappointed myself,” Gail chimed in before taking a sip of the tea Tatsumi had prepared. “Though not as much as His Highness. If I had tasted tea brewed by the Saintess, I could have boasted about it to my colleagues.”

Recently, Gail had been promoted to the royal guard, into a squad directly under Gioltrion’s command. He’d also found himself often being assigned as the archduke’s escort. His place in the rankings was actually decently high despite his newness to the guard, thanks to being a part of Gioltrion’s retinue.

Gail being chosen for the position had, of course, been linked to Tatsumi. When Gioltrion had chosen him, he’d said: “You know Tatsumi, right? Then you’ll be convenient as an escort. It’s better if I bring along someone who already knows him, and I’ve also heard you’re pretty skilled from Taroud.”

This had, unsurprisingly, initially left Gail feeling quite conflicted. However, regardless of why the archduke had chosen him, being close to royalty was an honor, and he was proud his skills as a knight were recognized.

With a slightly curious tone, Gail asked his young master, “By the way, Your Highness, do you truly believe you were in love with Calsedonia as a child?”

“Indeed I do,” Gioltrion replied, glancing briefly at Tatsumi before waving his hand dismissively. “But though I originally thought Grandpa Giuseppe brought her along as a potential marriage candidate for me, I realized pretty quickly that I didn’t have a chance.”

At the time, Giuseppe had not yet been the High Priest of the Savaiv Temple, but instead a tutor to the young Gioltrion. The task had been given to him by his close friend King Balraide Rezo Largofiery, who also happened to be the boy’s grandfather. Unfortunately for Gioltrion, he’d never had any intentions of making Calsedonia Gioltrion’s fiancé; he’d merely thought that due to their close ages, they could become friends.

At first, Calsedonia and Gioltrion had been somewhat awkward with each other, but as they’d met more frequently, they’d gradually warmed up, eventually becoming as close as siblings.

“Even back then, Calsedonia was always thinking about a certain boy, you know? Whenever she spoke, it was about him. Even though I was young, I could understand that she had feelings for the kid.” Gioltrion looked intently at Tatsumi, the implication as to who that “certain boy” had been clear as day. There was no need to speak it out loud—it was far too obvious.

Gail, quick to catch on, chuckled and said, “So, Lady Calsedonia was devoted to Tatsumi from the start, huh? That’s something you can even tease a prince about.”

Tatsumi’s face turned bright red. “Even you, Gail?!” he exclaimed, voice thick with betrayal. “Stop it!”

“Aha ha ha, that’s exactly the reaction I wanted to see!” Gioltrion laughed heartily, enjoying the moment.

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While Tatsumi, Gioltrion, and Gail were having a good time at the Yamagata residence, Calsedonia, who had been summoned to the Savaiv Temple, was looking puzzled.

“Someone wants to meet me?” she asked incredulously.

“Indeed, they requested you specifically,” Giuseppe informed her. “They wanted to meet ‘the priestess named Yamagata.’”

This only deepened her confusion. “Okay... So, who is it?”

“They’re a royal from our neighboring kingdom of Rival,” her grandfather replied, stroking his beard.

The Kingdom of Rival was located south of the Largofiery Kingdom and was somewhat smaller in scale, with its main industries being forestry and agriculture. A significant amount of timber, wood products, and agricultural produce from Rival were imported into Largofiery every year, and so the two kingdoms had maintained a friendly relationship for a very long time. Several marriages had even occurred between their royal families.

During the New Year's festival a few days ago, many delegations from friendly neighboring countries, including Rival, had visited the Kingdom of Largofiery. It seemed likely that the member of Rival's royal family who wished to meet Calsedonia was among the envoys present at the festival. And given the request had come from a royal of a friendly nation, even Giuseppe could not easily refuse it.

"Why would a member of the royal family of Rival want to meet with me?" Calsedonia asked.

"Um... About that," Giuseppe said, brows knitting as he continued to fuss with his beard. "I'm not entirely sure myself. They simply insist on meeting you. I apologize for the inconvenience, but could you please go and see them? I intend to be present as well."

Calsedonia felt a surge of wariness. In the past, nobles who'd taken a fancy to her had often made unilateral requests for meetings with her through Giuseppe. However, such occurrences had significantly decreased since Tatsumi had come into her life. While the occasional attempt was still made—some had still refused to give up on her—the number had significantly lessened.

Still, now that Calsedonia had married Tatsumi, it made no sense for anyone to court her. Their chances would be nonexistent. As a priestess of the Savaiv God, the patron deity of marriage, divorcing a spouse was not permitted.

What if the requester hadn't heard that she was married? They *were* from a different country, after all. And though Tatsumi and Calsedonia had had a spectacular wedding on the final day of the New Year's festival, the majority of attendees had been local townspeople. It was possible that the neighboring country's diplomatic delegations, which had been staying at the royal palace, had not heard about it.

This possibility made Calsedonia feel even more uncomfortable than before. Nonetheless, since Giuseppe had approved the meeting and would be present himself, she could not refuse to attend.

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Back at the Yamagata residence, Tatsumi and his companions were enjoying their time together. They might be rugged men, but they felt no need to hide behind any pretenses with one another.

“Has there been any discussion of you getting married, Gail?” Tatsumi asked.

“Yes, right after being assigned to the royal guards under the prince,” Gail replied with a wry smile.

Before he’d been promoted, his status as a fourth son with little chance of inheriting his family’s estate—which had been the reason he’d decided to become a knight—had naturally made him an unlikely choice for marriage proposals. However, as soon as it had become known that he was handpicked by Gioltrion for the royal guards, he’d received a number from his family.

“It’s ironic, isn’t it?” Gail said wryly. “I never had any such offers from my family before, and now they’re all too eager to contact me.”

The reasoning was obvious. Gioltrion would likely be the next king. Being directly under his command in the royal guard meant Gail had a promising future as a close aide to the person in the highest position of authority in the nation, which was quite a significant advancement even for someone who actually *had* had an estate to inherit. Thus, families interested in riding the coattails of his future prestige were now eager to have their daughters marry Gail.

“So, you’re in a position to choose a marriage partner, Gail!” Gioltrion exclaimed with a teasing grin. “Maaan, I’m so jealous.”

“I would prefer you didn’t joke about it, Your Highness. Tatsumi, don’t just stand there—tell him to cut it out!”

“Why should he?” Tatsumi asked, joining in on the banter. “Getting married is something to celebrate. As a priest of Savaiv, I’ll pray you have a happy union.”

“Please, not you too, Tatsumi!” Gail cried, blushing furiously. His emotions had clearly been thrown entirely into disarray.

Tatsumi and Gioltrion shared a laugh at how flustered their friend was. Tatsumi’s curiosity, however, had shifted to another friend’s marriage prospects.

“Speaking of marriage, what about you, Gioltrion? Do you have a fiancée or something?”

“Me? Given my position, of course, my marriage has long been arranged.”

“Really?” Tatsumi asked, his interest piqued. “Already? What’s your fiancée like?”

“She’s the eldest princess of the kingdom of Rival, our neighbor.”

“Wow, a princess from the neighboring country, huh? What kind of person is she? You’ve met her, right?”

“Yes, she comes to Largofiery every year for the New Year’s Festival. But even though we’re from neighboring countries, that’s about the only time we get to see each other.”

Gioltrion’s expression softened as he spoke. Despite the political nature of their engagement, it was clear he did not dislike his betrothed.

“Wait, you see her at the New Year’s Festival? So, she’s still at the royal palace now?”

“Yeah, that’s right. But I think she’s supposed to return to her country tomorrow.”

Tatsumi raised an eyebrow at Gioltrion’s response. “Should you be here then? Don’t you need to be attending to your fiancée instead of hanging out with us?”

“Ah, about that... She said she had some errands today and isn’t at the palace.”

“Is that so...”

*What kind of business could take a foreign royal away from the palace?* Tatsumi wondered. But he hesitated to probe further.

“It’s fine,” Gioltrion reassured them, his confidence unwavering. “We spent a lot of time together during the festival. And though we may not be as close as Tatsumi and Calsedonia, we get along pretty well.”

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Calsedonia and Giuseppe awaited the meeting with Rival's royal in one of the reception rooms of Savaiv Temple. When their visitor finally arrived, Calsedonia found herself quite surprised. She'd assumed the one who'd wanted to see her was a man based on her past experiences, but the person who stood before her, accompanied by numerous maidservants, was clearly a young girl who looked to be around fifteen years old. She let out a sigh of relief.

Upon closer inspection, the girl was clad in a fine scarlet dress befitting royalty, complemented by her long golden hair. Her eyes were a beautifully bright emerald green, and radiated a strong, confident light.

She was an exquisitely beautiful yet endearing-looking girl, resembling a doll in her perfection. However, now that she was in the reception room, she seemed almost like she was floundering, looking for help.

"Are you the priestess named Yamagata?!" the girl demanded, pointing her finger sharply at Calsedonia.

"Yes, I am Priestess Calsedonia Yamagata!" Calsedonia responded with great joy. Now that she was married to Tatsumi, her last name had officially been changed to his. Hearing it out of someone else's mouth was blissful for her, even if the one addressing her was a stranger.

As for the girl who had pointed at her, her expression had become thoroughly perplexed. Her finger drifted back at her side, her boldness slinking away with it as she took in Calsedonia's bright smile.

"You... Are you *really* the priestess named Yamagata?"

"Yes, that's me..." Calsedonia answered, tilting her head slightly in response.

The girl stood there for a moment, oddly deflated, then cleared her throat with a small cough and pointed her slender, pale finger sternly at Calsedonia once again.

"How dare you seduce His Highness Gioltrion?! He is my fiancé! For a mere priestess like you to interfere between me and him—it's nothing short of presumptuous!"

"Me? Seduce Gioltrion? *Archduke* Gioltrion...?" Calsedonia, taken aback, exchanged looks with Giuseppe, who was sitting next to her. Naturally, there

was no truth to the accusation that she had seduced Gioltrion, and Giuseppe was well aware of this.

“I apologize, Princess Lalaina. My adopted daughter, Calsedonia, is already married to another. She would never attempt to seduce Prince Gioltrion,” Giuseppe gently explained to the young girl. “As you know, for a priestess of the Savaiv, infidelity is a grave sin.”

“But I heard it with my own ears, High Priest Giuseppe! All His Highness Gioltrion could talk about was this woman!” Lalaina glared at Calsedonia, eyes aflame with anger.

“Oh, so Gioltrion has been talking about Calsey, has he? Could you please elaborate on what exactly you heard?” Giuseppe inquired.

“Yes, I can. During the last New Year’s Festival, while I was staying in the palace of this country...”

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“So, you and this Princess Lalaina have known each other for quite some time?”

“Not as long as I’ve known Calsedonia, but she became my official fiancée after I turned ten. Since then, she’s been coming to this country every year for the New Year’s Festival.”

“A fiancée at ten... I can’t even imagine that,” Tatsumi reflected.

After growing up in modern-day Japan, the concept of being betrothed at such a young age was unthinkable to him. This was a whole different world, however, and Gioltrion was royalty. Here in Largofiery, such arrangements were not unusual.

*Although, marriage arrangements of that sort did happen on Earth during certain time periods, in both the eastern and western world, didn’t they?* Tatsumi realized. *And even in the modern world, there are some cases where it must still occur.*



“Just because my marriage will be political, that doesn’t mean it’s unwanted,” Gioltrion said, cutting into Tatsumi’s thoughts. “I genuinely like Lalaina, and she has the capability to be a great queen in the future.”

“Wow... If there’s a chance, I’d love for you to introduce me to her,” Tatsumi replied. If the archduke held her in such high regard, he figured she would likely get along with him and Calsedonia as well.

“Of course. This year it might be tough to arrange, but next year, I’ll definitely do so,” Gioltrion promised.

All of a sudden, there was a knock on Tatsumi’s front door. When he went open it, he was surprised to find a messenger from Savaiv Temple on the other side.

Apparently, Giuseppe had sent for both Tatsumi and Gioltrion. Taking into account how Calsedonia had been summoned earlier, they both teleported to the temple in a hurry. Gail was following them on foot, so he wouldn’t arrive till later.

“What’s going on, Giuseppe?” Tatsumi asked once they’d met up with the High Priest.

“Well, you see...” Giuseppe stroked his beard with a wry smile. “It seems Princess Lalaina confused you and Calsey.”

“Huh? How?” Baffled, Tatsumi turned to look at Calsedonia. She also wore a puzzled expression.

Giuseppe proceeded to explain things from Princess Lalaina’s perspective. She had apparently visited Largofiery for the New Year’s festival as usual, and had been greatly looking forward to spending time with Gioltrion and celebrating their reunion after the entire year apart. However, this year had brought unexpected tensions.

“This year, he kept talking about a priest named Yamagata at the Savaiv Temple,” the princess cut in. “I was curious, so I had my maidservant investigate, and she informed me the person in question was a beautiful female priestess. Naturally, I assumed that His Highness Gioltrion had fallen for this woman named Yamagata...”

Hearing this, Tatsumi involuntarily turned his gaze towards Gioltrion, who was staring exasperatedly at his fiancée. “Look, Lalaina, it’s true I might have talked a lot about that priest this year, but I wasn’t talking about Calsedonia Yamagata. I was talking about *Tatsumi* Yamagata—this guy right here.”

“See, Princess Lalaina?” Giuseppe chimed in. “As I told you, the Yamagata that Gioltrion mentioned is a man.”

“I am t-truly sorry...” Lalaina stammered, her confusion evident. “I never considered that there might be two people with the same unusual name.”

Indeed, in this world, it was highly unlikely that anyone other than Tatsumi would have the last name Yamagata. From that perspective, Lalaina’s misunderstanding was understandable. Yet, it was only recently that another Yamagata—Calsedonia, of course—had become known within the Savaiv Temple. And when Lalaina’s maidservant, who’d already been predisposed to think the priest she was searching for was a woman, had made her inquiries, she’d never even thought to inquire after men with the same name. That was what had led to the mix-up.

Gioltrion *had* mentioned that Tatsumi was the mystery priest’s first name, but since it was foreign, Lalaina had had no way of knowing whether it was typically given to men over women or vice versa.

“It seems it was all just an unfortunate timing,” Giuseppe concluded with a slight chuckle.

“True. If Tatsumi and Calsedonia hadn’t gotten married at the festival, this misunderstanding might not have happened,” Gioltrion added, reflecting on the unexpected consequences of the situation. Undoubtedly, some of the responsibility laid with him as well—he should have been more clear about who and what he was talking about.

“Moreover, it was a misunderstanding driven by Princess Lalaina’s love for you, Your Highness,” Calsedonia interjected. “Perhaps you should have been more thoughtful about your words.”

“You’re both right. I’m sorry, Lalaina. I should have been more careful,” Gioltrion admitted, his tone apologetic.

“No, no... It was entirely my foolishness to jump to such conclusions. I’m truly embarrassed...” Lalaina blushed deeply and bowed her head, her words trailing off.

Gioltrion gently wrapped his arms around her shoulders, offering comfort. “Then let’s move past it, and I’ll introduce everyone properly. This is my new friend, Tatsumi Yamagata, and Calsedonia Yamagata, who recently became his wife. And this is my fiancée, Princess Lalaina Rival. I hope you’ll all get along.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you,” Lalaina told them, lifting her dress slightly in a graceful curtsy, her mannerisms refined and befitting her status as a princess. “I am Lalaina Rival. Lord Tatsumi and Lady Calsedonia, I sincerely apologize for the misunderstanding and any offense it caused. As the fiancée of Lord Gioltrion, I hope to be better acquainted with you in the future.”

“I am Tatsumi Yamagata, a senior priest. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Princess Lalaina,” Tatsumi responded with a respectful nod.

“And I am Calsedonia Yamagata, his wife. It’s nice to meet you formally, Your Highness,” Calsedonia added, her tone warm and welcoming.

Lalaina’s expression relaxed, showing a touch of relief. “Lord Tatsumi, I noticed you call His Highness by his name. Please feel free to call me by mine as well.”

“Understood, Lalaina,” he responded with a friendly smile. “Then please call me Tatsumi.”

“You can call me ‘Calsedonia’ or even ‘Calsey’ if you prefer,” Calsedonia chimed in, solidifying the friendly and informal tone of their new relationship.

“As the fiancée of His Highness and as a good friend, I look forward to our future friendship,” Lalaina said with a bright smile.

Giuseppe observed the scene with a satisfied grin. “It seems that Prince Gioltrion and Princess Lalaina, like Tatsumi and Calsedonia, are likely to make a fine couple,” he observed. “As a servant of Savaiv, it pleases me greatly.”

As a priest of Savaiv, the god of marriage, Giuseppe valued harmony among couples. Clasp the holy seal that shone at his chest, he sincerely prayed to his deity for the happiness of the newlyweds and the royal pair who were soon to

be married. This moment of unity and mutual understanding among the young couples was a blessing in his eyes, aligning with the divine favor of Savaiv.



## Extra Side Story: A Certain Priest's Love Story

The warrior priests who dedicated themselves to protecting the Savaiv Temple and its followers trained rigorously every day at a training ground located behind the temple. On this particular day, the area buzzed with the energetic shouts of the warriors and the clashing sounds of weapons echoing through the air.

In a shaded spot a short distance from the training ground, a girl of about fifteen years old stood observing quietly. She wore a robe and a holy seal, symbols of her status as a junior priest, and was watching intently as one of the warrior priests went through his strenuous workout routine.

“Here I come, Tatsumi! Let’s clash with all our might today!” came an energetic voice.

It belonged to Shiro, the youngest of the Niizu brothers, who was preparing for a sparring session. Opposite him, Tatsumi frowned, visibly reluctant.

The pair readied their weapons under the watchful eyes of their peers, including Barse. Tatsumi was armed with his usual one-handed sword and shield, while Shiro wielded a cumbersome pole hammer, a lance-like weapon with a massive hammer attached to the end. It was a difficult weapon to wield due to its length and heft, but its strikes were extremely powerful. As such, there were few warriors who chose to use the pole hammer, but Shiro preferred it.

At Barse’s signal, Shiro advanced towards Tatsumi, moving surprisingly quick for his weapon’s size. He raised the pole hammer and brought it down with full force towards Tatsumi’s head, shouting, “Boom!!”

With that somewhat lackluster battle cry, the pole hammer swung down. It failed to strike Tatsumi, however, and slammed into the floor of the training grounds instead, sending a cloud of dust swirling around.

As they continued to fight, Shiro wielded the pole hammer with a surprising level of speed and precision for such a cumbersome and heavy weapon. His strikes were so fast and forceful that even Tatsumi, skilled with the shield, could not defend against them entirely. Any attempt to block opened him up to the very real possibility of being crushed. Such was the power of Shiro's blow.

Swiftly stepping back, Tatsumi danced out of the reach of the pole hammer. Seizing the chance to strike when Shiro was still setting up for another hit, he closed the distance between them again and swung his sword sideways, slicing across Shiro's torso. The hit landed with a dull thud.

Though the sword was meant to be used during training and had been dulled for safety, being a strike of such substantial force was not something that Shiro could just shake off. He grimaced at the surge of pain that shot through his middle, groans of agony leaving his lips. But then... his expression shifted.

"Ah, aha ha ha... It feels... so good..." Cheeks flushed with dazed ecstasy, Shiro's eyes dreamily fixed on Tatsumi. "Come on, keep hitting me! Make it feel even better!"

Hearing Shiro's heated and bizarre plea, Tatsumi, as well as everyone else who was watching—Barse, Niizu, Sago, and a group of other warrior priests—looked on with distinctly disgusted expressions, utterly repelled.

"Hey, Niizu, Sago... Can't something be done about him?" Barse, drained from witnessing the sparring, asked the brothers standing beside him.

"No way," they responded in unison. "That's just how he is. There's no helping it... As a kid, he used to do mischief just to get hit by dad."

"I... shouldn't have asked," Barse muttered, his expression growing even more hollow as his shoulders slumped in resignation.

Knowing Shiro's expression would only grow more ecstatic with each strike, Tatsumi desperately turned towards Barse and the others for help. However, in

that moment, all they did was quickly avert their eyes. Feeling abandoned by his comrades, Tatsumi nearly broke into tears.

“Come on, Tatsumi! No need to hold back! Let’s clash with all our might!” Shiro called out enthusiastically.

“Ugh... I really don’t want to...” Tatsumi mumbled, his face twisting into a look of extreme reluctance as he continued to battle with Shiro.

Despite his peculiar proclivity, Shiro’s prowess as a warrior was unmatched among his peers, including Tatsumi. His hallmark traits as a fighter were his extraordinary physical strength and incredible speed. They made him a formidable force, though perhaps not the most revolutionary one.

The most fearsome thing about him, however, was the fact that he did not fear pain. To Shiro, minor injuries were nothing more than rewards, and his lack of fear of getting hurt had led him to adopt an aggressive fighting style that favored attack over defense. However, even Shiro would take the time to block attacks that could incapacitate him—after all, not doing so would shorten the duration he could enjoy being hit.

No matter how many blows Tatsumi landed, Shiro just smiled ecstatically and counterattacked. His demeanor truly made him resemble a berserker, to the point that anyone facing him would feel some level of terror.

Tatsumi’s expression, meanwhile, danced between vigilant and reluctant. Though this was only a training session, failing to dodge one of the pole hammer’s heavy blows could easily render him incapacitated. Worse, a particularly bad hit could even prove life-threatening. Warrior priests losing their lives during training was not a common occurrence, but it did happen.

“Hey, Niizu, Sago... Can’t you do something about your brother?” inquired a tired-looking Ojin, echoing Barse’s earlier sentiment.

The fact that Shiro had amazing prowess as a warrior was undeniable. He could hold his own against even the most skilled warrior priests, and would have held a top rank if magic hadn’t been considered. Ojin’s issue was with his sexual proclivities—they were problematic.

As members of the temple, warrior priests were expected to uphold a certain level of dignity. For the majority, whatever sexual preferences they had caused no issue—Savaiv didn't explicitly forbid homosexuality or polyamory—but Shiro's fetish for being hit was troubling from a decorum perspective.

"If it weren't for that, his skills would be on par with the captain of the guards," Ojin muttered, causing Barse and Niizu to grimace wryly.

Beside Barse and Ojin stood Calsedonia, her beautiful platinum blonde hair flowing smoothly back and forth with her every movement. Her crimson eyes, filled with worry, were fixed on Tatsumi and Shiro as they sparred.

When a powerful swing of Shiro's pole hammer nearly reached Tatsumi, Calsedonia instinctively stepped forward. But as Tatsumi coolly stepped back, dodging Shiro's attack, she pressed a hand to her ample chest and let out a sigh of relief.

"Don't worry, Lady Calsedonia," Barse said, trying to reassure her. "Tatsumi won't be defeated that easily. Besides, you can heal most injuries in no time, can't you?"

"But... I'm still worried," Calsedonia admitted with a shrug and a wry smile. It was clear that even though she and Tatsumi were now married, he was just as precious to her as he'd been before.

"What a worrywart," Barse muttered under his breath.

Calsedonia went back to watching Tatsumi with a visibly anxious expression, not paying attention to any of the others on the sidelines even as they began to shout.

"Come on, Tatsumi! Don't make your wife worry too much!"

"Finish off Shiro quickly and reassure your newlywed wife!"

Tatsumi couldn't help but smile wryly at these remarks. Seeing his reaction, Shiro couldn't help but be irked at no longer having his full attention.

"Tatsumi, right now I'm the one in front of you, right?!" he demanded with his usual flamboyance. "Forget about everyone else for now and just look at me! Hit me with all of your might!"



“Stop talking like that!” Tatsumi retorted, exasperated by Shiro’s odd desires.

Naturally, the other warrior priests watching burst into laughter. Among them, some cheered for Shiro.

“Shiro! Show him the tenacity of a single man!”

“That’s right! Show them that not everyone is happy in this world!”

“Even as a priest of Savaiv, the god of marriage, some guys just aren’t popular!”

With a cheerful grin and a wave to the crowd, Shiro responded, “Leave it to me! I’ll give Tatsumi a good spanking!”

“Seriously, don’t phrase it like that!” Tatsumi shouted back, his plea drowned out by the laughter and cheers of their comrades.

Caught off guard by Shiro’s misleading words, Tatsumi unconsciously absorbed some magical energy and channeled it into his sword, causing it to glow with a luminescent aura. He then struck Shiro in the stomach with the weapon, inadvertently fulfilling his request.

A soft *boom* marked the release of a minor magical explosion. Thankfully, it wasn’t a very forceful one, since it’d been an accident.

“Ah, shoot,” Tatsumi muttered as Shiro collapsed onto the training hall floor, back-first.

“Ugh. Heh heh heh... That’s... the best feeling... ever...” Shiro murmured. Then, with a more blissful expression than ever before, he lost consciousness.

Ojin quickly assessed Shiro’s condition and, determining the injuries were minor, approached Tatsumi with a stern expression. Dropping a hefty fist onto the top of Tatsumi’s head, he declared: “You went too far, you fool.”

Tatsumi crumpled to the ground, clutching his head from the impact, and Ojin called for Calsedonia.

“Calsey, your husband’s made a mess. As his wife, I’m holding you responsible for healing Shiro’s wounds.”

Despite being concerned for her pained husband, Calsedonia was clearly pleased to be called his wife. She knelt beside the fallen Shiro and began healing him, just as Ojin had instructed.

Out of the corner of her eye, Calsedonia noticed a small figure dashing away into the temple building. It'd come from within the shadows produced by the trees outside the training hall.

“Was that...?”

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Inside the temple, a young girl with fluffy chestnut hair exhaled deeply, the gush of air bouncing her locks. Her cheeks, framed by her hair, were flushed, and her moist grayish-blue eyes sparkled with tears. Her heart pounded violently, betraying her agitation.

Crossing her small hands in front of her modest chest, she closed her eyes, vividly recalling the scene she had just witnessed. The image that lingered in her mind was that of a lone warrior priest, valiantly wielding his weapon. Every time she'd seen him, her heart had been profoundly stirred.

“Ah... Every time I see that look of his...” Curie blew out another breath. So deep were her feelings for the warrior priest that the air itself seemed colored with her emotions.

Leaning against the wall of the temple corridor, Curie smiled blissfully to herself, completely lost in her thoughts. But her solitude was interrupted by a voice.

“Oh, Curie? What are you doing here all alone?”

“Wh-Wha—?!”

Startled by the unexpected voice, Curie jumped up high in surprise. Once she'd landed back on her feet, she hastily turned toward the direction of the speaker. Standing there was an older female priestess with smoky-gold hair and dark brown eyes, adorned with the sacred seal and garb that indicated her position as an elder priestess.

Curie knew her well. She was a renowned player of the lute, and she was a common acquaintance of both Curie and her superior, Calsedonia.

“L-Lorraine?” Curie stammered.

“Did something happen? You rushed into the temple as if something was the matter.”

“W-Were you watching me?!”

“I was, but only from the moment you dashed into the temple. If you came through that entrance...”—Lorraine pointed to the door through which Curie had just scampered—“you would have been out back, right?”

Although Lorraine’s face had originally been puzzled, as she looked between Curie’s face and the temple’s rear exit, a sly, knowing smile spread across her face. “Hmm, I see. So, it involves one of the warrior priests, does it?”

“Waah! Please, don’t say any more!!!” Panicking, Curie wildly waved her hands, trying desperately to cut off Lorraine’s teasing remarks.

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A few moments later, Curie found herself enduring a gentle interrogation inside Lorraine’s room within the women’s quarters of the temple.

“If the person you’re after is a warrior priest, why don’t you consult Calsedonia?” Lorraine asked. “She’s been frequenting the training grounds quite a bit with Tatsumi lately, you know. Whoever your crush is, Calsedonia can probably gather some information for you.”

Curie, who had been blushing and looking down until now, started to panic at the mention of Calsedonia’s name. “Uh, no, I mean... That is, because...”

Her words were a jumble, making no sense. Observing Curie’s reaction, Lorraine furrowed her brows.

“Hold on, Curie... I don’t want to assume, but it’s not Tatsumi, is it?”

Curie frantically shook her head in response to Lorraine’s narrowing eyes. However, Lorraine’s expression remained skeptical.

For a priest of Savaiv, the god of marriage, infidelity was a grave sin, potentially leading to excommunication and a loss of clerical status. For a mere believer, the consequences might be less severe, but a priest of Savaiv caught in an affair could face lifelong disdain from their community.

“Listen, it *can’t* be Tatsumi, okay? He’s a direct disciple of the High Priest, and now, by marrying Calsedonia, he’s practically family. You shouldn’t harbor feelings for someone like tha—”

“It’s not him! I swear to Savaiv, it’s not Tatsumi that I’m thinking of!” Curie screeched vehemently, interrupting Lorraine. Her face was still flushed, but her expression was serious. It seemed that, indeed, her affections were not directed towards Tatsumi.

Relieved, yet curious, Lorraine pressed further. “Then who is it that you *do* have feelings for?”

After repeating the cycle of opening her mouth to speak, hesitating, and then closing it again several times, Curie finally confided the name of her beloved to Lorraine.

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Several days later, after finishing her duties at the temple, Calsedonia returned home and shared a story she’d heard from Lorraine with her husband.

“Wait... Curie? *That* Curie, right? The one who’s petite and somewhat reminds you of a small animal...?” Tatsumi asked. He’d met the young priest several times, since she was somewhat under Calsedonia’s supervision.

“Yes, Master, *that* Curie. And she has feelings for—”

“Shiro? Of all people, Shiro? Are you sure?” Although Tatsumi didn’t doubt Calsedonia’s words, he found them hard to believe. “Does Curie know about his... habits? Or rather, preferences?”

It wasn’t as if Shiro’s sexual proclivities were a secret. In fact, they were quite well-known. And though he didn’t believe no women would be interested in Shiro knowing his peculiar taste, the thought of the demure Curie being one of them was almost inconceivable.

“I heard this from Lorraine, and she doesn’t even know the first thing about Shiro’s preferences,” Calsedonia replied. “It’s likely that Curie doesn’t either.”

“Hmm, that’s complicated...”

Tatsumi crossed his arms, looking troubled. Calsedonia watched him with a troubled expression of her own.

“Anyway, Lorraine suggested they meet in person, right?”

Calsedonia nodded in response to Tatsumi’s question. He sighed deeply and made a decision, though in truth, his choice was more a deferral to the inevitable.

“All right, I’ll arrange for them to meet. What happens after that... Well, it’s up to them.”

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Several days later, Tatsumi escorted Shiro to the Elf’s Repose Inn. At the exact same moment, Calsedonia was doing the same with Curie.

The reason Tatsumi had given Shiro for the outing was straightforward: there was a woman who wanted to meet him. Upon hearing this, Shiro had responded with a beaming smile.

“The Elf’s Repose Inn? Isn’t that where we celebrated you and Lady Calsedonia’s wedding? I remember there being a beautiful elf lady there. Wow, could she be the woman who wants to meet with me?! To be stepped on by such a beautiful person... Ah, I’m getting excited.”

“No, the person who wants to meet isn’t the elf, and I don’t think she would do that, anyway,” Tatsumi muttered, barely managing a smile to cover his annoyance. He had a sneaking suspicion that once Curie learned about Shiro’s peculiar tastes, she might change her mind.

Still, the inn was in sight, so Tatsumi went ahead and opened the door and went inside.

Elle, already aware of their arrival, welcomed him with a prompt, “Hey, Tatsumi. Calsedonia is already here.” Having been briefed on the situation

beforehand, she led Tatsumi and Shiro to where Calsedonia and Curie were waiting without further ado.

Calsedonia, having noticed Tatsumi's arrival, waved at him with a joyful smile as they approached. Curie, on the other hand, glanced over intermittently before quickly looking down again. She was visibly flushed even from afar.

"Sorry, did we keep you waiting?" Tatsumi said in greeting.

"No, we've just arrived ourselves," Calsedonia replied.

As the pair said hello, the regulars around them, known for their beast-hunting prowess, smirked knowingly but remained silent. It was likely that Elle had briefed them on the situation and asked them to refrain from making any rude comments so the meeting could go smoothly without any interruptions.

Calsedonia and Tatsumi laughed and then left the table, leaving Shiro and Curie to chat with one another. At that moment, no one in the Elf's Repose Inn could begin to predict how the awkward meeting would unfold. Shiro was clueless as to how to interact with a near stranger, and Curie was having a hard time even meeting his eyes.

In the end, the first to break the silence was Curie. "Um, Senior Priest Shiro," she began, nervously trying to explain her feelings, "I've actually admired you for a long time, and I am very happy to be able to meet you in person today."

Shiro gazed into Curie's eyes, his expression a bit surprised. "That's very kind of you, Curie," he told her. "I didn't expect you to be so brave and forward about your feelings. Honestly, it's rare for someone to show me such favor, and I'm a bit perplexed..."

Relieved by Shiro's candid response, the anxiety on Curie's face eased, and the atmosphere between the pair relaxed bit by bit.

"I was also captivated by your way of fighting," Curie admitted. "Your style is so unique and... impressive..."

"You think so? Thank you, Curie. My fighting style is a bit unusual, so I never really thought I'd find someone who understood it."

At that moment, Curie mustered up all her courage. “I might not be into such things myself, but I find that aspect of you refreshing. And... interesting.”

Shiro grinned at Curie’s words. It seemed a mutual acceptance was beginning to blossom between them.

Though the pair seemed mismatched to the typical observer, they had the ability to empathize and understand one another. Neither of them were sure where the odd relationship they’d just begun would lead, but at least for the moment, they felt the need to spend time getting to know each other.

Outside the Elf’s Repose Inn, the quiet of the night grew ever deeper.

Shooting the oblivious pair matching smiles, Tatsumi and Calsedonia made a quick exit. And as the hours ticked along, the inn’s regulars looked on with mischievous grins.

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Several days later, as Tatsumi was about to head home after a day’s work, he was confronted by a very upset Niizu and Sago.

“Hey, Tatsumi! What’s the meaning of this?!”

“Yeah! Why would you introduce a girl to *Shiro* of all people, and not us first?!”

It seemed they had caught wind of Tatsumi’s role in facilitating the meeting between Shiro and Curie. Essentially, they were saying, “Introduce someone to us too!”

“Uh, well... The girl, she seemed to like Shiro...”

Left with no other choice, Tatsumi went on to explain the circumstances that’d led him to introduce Curie to Shiro at the Elf’s Repose Inn. The two brothers listened with dumbfounded faces, much like Tatsumi had when he’d first heard about Curie’s crush from Calsedonia.

“That’s... I’m sorry, Tatsumi, it must have been tough for you.”

“We appreciate you looking out for our brother. Please thank Lady Calsedonia for us too.”

Niizu and Sago bowed their heads, showing their brotherly gratitude to their friend and his wife for putting themselves out there for their peculiar sibling.

“But... the next time something like this comes up, make sure you introduce me first!” Niizu demanded upon raising his head.

“Sorry, Niizu,” Sago broke in, “but I wanna be first next time!”

“Yeah, I’ll keep that in mind,” Tatsumi said lightly. “If such a situation comes up again, I’ll suggest Calsedonia introduce you two as well.”

Despite the fact that the brothers were both priests of the god Savaiv, female priests typically ran in different circles than male priests. Because of that, the married couples among the believers frequently served as mediators between the two groups. Given that dynamic, it was more likely than not that Tatsumi and Calsedonia would receive similar requests in the future.

As Tatsumi, Niizu, and Sago walked toward the main gate of the Savaiv Temple, chatted back and forth about various things. They discussed the rigors of their training, griped about certain seniors, and even conversed about their future dreams. They were topics typical of men in their early twenties, and Tatsumi found he enjoyed speaking of them with the male priests in a different way than he did with Calsedonia.

During this pleasant interlude, a now-familiar voice reached Tatsumi’s ears. “Ah, Lord Tatsumi! Thank you for your help the other day! By any chance, are these two gentlemen Shiro’s brothers?”

Turning toward the voice, the trio saw Curie and Shiro, the very subjects of their earlier discussion. However, the sight that greeted them made Niizu and Sago’s eyes widen in shock. And it wasn’t just them; other priests and followers of Savaiv at the scene also stared at the duo as if they were seeing something extraordinary.

Shiro was wearing a bulky collar around his neck. A thick leash extended from it, held firmly in Curie’s petite hands. Looking at them, one couldn’t help but think they were master and slave. Or perhaps, pet and owner.



“Um... Curie? What’s going on with Shiro’s outfit?” Tatsumi managed to ask, his voice trembling.

Just as Curie was about to answer, Shiro stepped forward with a delighted expression and took the lead. “Ah, you see, Tatsumi, Lady Curie has become my master, and—”

Suddenly, Shiro choked on his words. It seemed Curie had yanked the leash sharply.

“Hey, who gave you permission to step forward before your master?”

“I-I apologize, Master!”

“How many times must I discipline you before you learn not to speak without permission, slave?”

The exchange left no doubt about the dynamics of Shiro and Curie’s new relationship, shocking everyone around.

Curie coldly delivered a command, and Shiro, delighted, immediately got down on all fours. Naturally, Tatsumi and the others, including bystanders, were left in utter shock.

“Lord Tatsumi, thank you so much for introducing me to the slave I’ve been searching for all this time,” Curie said, her face shifting from a stern frown to a bright smile as she deeply bowed to Tatsumi.

“Uh, Curie? You knew about Shiro’s p-p-preferences?” Tatsumi stammered, bewildered.

“Yes, of course! I’ve been watching Shiro for a long time! Seeing him looking so happy every time he got hurt in the training grounds... I just couldn’t resist the urge to dominate him,” Curie confessed, her cheeks reddening as she squirmed with excitement. Meanwhile, Shiro remained silently on all fours, undoubtedly wearing a look of bliss that wasn’t visible to the others.

“Hey, Shiro... Are you really okay with this?” Niizu inquired, worried about his brother.

Shiro, still on all fours, glanced briefly at Curie.

“It’s your brother asking, so of course I’ll allow you to speak,” Curie said, maintaining her stern demeanor towards Shiro.

He nodded eagerly, as if her words were the most natural response in the world. “Yes, Niizu, I am. I’m really, really happy right now! Sure, being stepped on by a beautiful lady like Lady Calsedonia is great, but being looked down upon with disdain by a younger girl like Lady Curie... Just that look makes me... makes me...”

Shiro’s expression, radiant with an ungodly amount of happiness, made everyone around instinctively step back.

“Well, what can I say—if both parties have found what they seek in each other, then perhaps Savaiv himself would bless this... Right, Tatsumi?” Sago asked, struggling to find the right words.

“Yeah, that sounds right,” Tatsumi agreed as he nodded repeatedly, somewhat overwhelmed. Indeed, since both Curie and Shiro desired their relationship dynamic, the way they spoke to one another could be seen as just another form of affection.

“Then, Lord Tatsumi, Shiro’s brothers, please continue to look after this foolish slave and myself in the future!” Curie declared with a bright smile, bowing slightly. Then, with a firm tug on the leash, she got Shiro to stand up and led him out of the temple grounds, heading toward the town.

While there was some hesitation over whether it was appropriate for them to enter town in such a state, the shock of what Tatsumi and the other bystanders had witnessed was too great. They found themselves without the will to intervene.

Tatsumi glanced around and saw that some of those nearby were hurriedly averting their eyes and walking away. “Hey, Niizu, Sago, when we get another request... is it still all right if I decide to introduce the two of you?”

“Ah, um, if it’s a normal girl, then it’s fine,” Sago replied. But surely...”

Niizu, on the other hand, dropped to his knees just like Shiro had earlier. “Why can Shiro, with his bizarre preferences, find someone, while I can’t find

anyone at all...?" he lamented, tearfully pounding his fists on the ground repeatedly. "It's unfathomable! Absolutely unfathomable!"

Incidentally, because of this incident, some followers of Savaiv began to secretly refer to Tatsumi as the "Slave Trader," though he wouldn't find out about this nickname until much later.



It's been over half a year since the release of volume three, and I apologize for the long wait, but I'm finally able to deliver volume four to you.

Hello, I'm Muku Buncho.

As mentioned earlier, about eight months have passed since the last volume was released. To everyone who has been waiting—you *were* waiting, right?—thank you for your patience! I present to you the fourth volume of *My Pet is a Saintess*.

For those of you who have read the web version or have already seen the text, you'll know that this volume finally brings about a certain milestone for Tatsumi and Calsedonia. It might be overdue to mention it, but acknowledging such things is nonetheless important. From here on, the two of them, are now officially married and will start their life of adventure and loving mischief.

Speaking of which, the web version I mentioned briefly has recently concluded. It's been two and a half years since the serialization started. Posting the final chapter and marking it as complete felt profoundly different since it's my first work to be turned into a book.

That I was able to continue writing about the exploits of Tatsumi and Calsedonia even after the web version ended is one of the joys of getting published.

In the process of this book's publication, I received help from various people.

I'd like to thank everyone at TO Books who was involved in *My Pet is a Saintess*, as well as Akira Caskabe, who draws the beautiful illustrations each time. In the previous volume, the foldout pinup of Mirial and the little chibi

versions of Tatsumi and Calsedonia below really brought a smile to my face. I also really enjoyed the powerful portrayal of Tatsumi on page 201. Furthermore, I heard that this time the cover illustration features Calsedonia in her wedding dress (might be a bit too late to hide that one) and I'm really looking forward to seeing it.

Most importantly, to all the readers who have supported this work from the web version onward, thank you very much.

November 2016, Muku Buncho

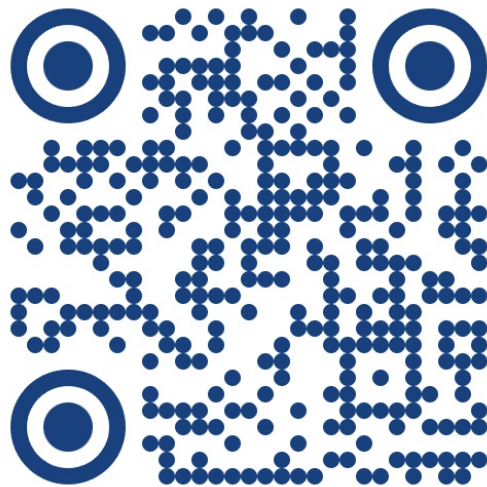
# Thank you all

Thank you for completing Volume 4 of "My Pet is a Saintess"! We hope you've enjoyed the heartwarming journey of Tatsumi and his saintess companion. Your support is invaluable to us.

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