



VILLAINESS LEVEL 99

I May Be the Hidden Boss
But I'm Not the Demon Lord

6

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Prologue

It had been about a week since we'd returned from the Royal Capital, and the end of the year was approaching. Actually, it was better to describe it as the approach of the Foundation Festival since the festival marked the end of the calendar year in the Kingdom of Valschein. The Foundation Festival took place in winter, so I liked to think of it as New Year's.

The fall harvest was over, and tax calculations had been completed. Every year, both commoners and aristocrats would get the day off to celebrate this holiday, but Dolkness County had no time for rest. Patrick's and my wedding was planned for a date with impeccable timing—it would be right before the excitement of the Foundation Festival would die down, and it was also before the arrival of spring. Invitations had been sent out long ago.

Since I'd uncharacteristically gotten involved in central matters, I wanted to take a break, but there was no time for that. I didn't even have time to get sentimental and think, *Wow, I'm getting married...*

I was sitting in the lord's office, waging a staring contest against tax-related documents. To celebrate the change in lords and gain favor with my people, I had decided that the county wouldn't be collecting taxes this year, but we still recorded the harvest and calculated what we would've collected in taxes. I was starting to get depressed about how things were going to be even more work next year.

I took a quick break to stretch, and Eleanora entered the office.

"Yumiella, do you have a moment?"

"Is something wrong?"

"No, I don't have any matter in particular to discuss, but...I wanted to spend some time with you. Is that all right?"

Eleanora's so cute! Yay! So this is what comes off as cute. I'll use it on Patrick another time. Until now, I'd been coming up with random topics to create an

opportunity to talk to him, but thinking back on it, it might not have been that endearing.

I happily welcomed Eleanora. “Of course. I was just thinking it would be nice to take a break.”

“Yay! I’m so glad!”

No matter what we were talking about, it was a fun time with my dear friend Eleanora. Even if the topic was something I had no interest in, if it was important to Eleanora, I could listen to her go on about the most inane things. *That’s how you show respect to a person!*

“Do you remember the perfume I introduced you to? It’s more real than a real...”

No matter how much someone might want to, most people couldn’t catch a four-seam fastball going 160 kilometers per hour—similarly, there were just some things that humans couldn’t do. That’s why it couldn’t be helped if I zoned out a bit. Once Eleanora got going about perfumes, she wouldn’t stop. If I asked one question, she’d respond to it with one hundred answers’ worth of information. She could easily talk for four hours straight when it came to fragrances.

But I’d experienced this several times by now, and I was starting to gain some knowledge on perfumes. I knew what she was about to discuss right now. It was easy for me to follow along.

“I’ve heard of that. You’re talking about the imposter who founded Parfeu, the perfumer Tritus, right?” Parfeu was Eleanora’s favorite fragrance brand. I’d been forced to hear the name countless times since we were students, so it was burned into my memory. That also meant I needed no further explanation. “If I remember correctly, he gets inspiration from his surroundings, like scenery, objects, and culture, when making perfumes...”

“His name is Sir Quartus,” Eleanora said, correcting me. “Let me start from the beginning.”

I see. It was Quartus, not Tritus. I’d just mixed up whether his name had a three or four in it, but Eleanora ever so graciously decided to explain things

from the beginning. *This is going to take a while.*

And so, time passed slowly—the seas dried up, the land dried out, and everything in the world weathered. Eleanora energetically kept talking, and we eventually reached the truth of the matter.

“That was when I realized, it was all lies!”

“What?! I can’t believe it was all made up.” Though I responded to show I was listening, I couldn’t figure out what she was talking about. *We’re talking about perfume, right?*

Eleanora’s ability to explain things left much to be desired, and my understanding was just not there. Both the speaker and listener lacking in skill was like the car wheels not touching the ground. We ultimately couldn’t get anywhere.

Eleanora’s topic wrapped up for now, and she seemed to have noticed that she’d gone on for quite some time. “Oh dear, I’ve been talking about myself this entire time... Is there anything that’s been on your mind these days, Yumiella?”

This was the branching point of my fate. If I pulled out a shared topic of interest here, we could both be engaged in the conversation. I decided to play it safe and go with something that all of humanity would be interested in. *Oh, I know!*

“Would you be interested in talking about strong concealable weapons that can be made using the technology this kingdom has access to?”

“You really seem to be fond of such topics, Yumiella...” Eleanora had been wearing an elated smile until mere moments ago, but her expression suddenly clouded over. *Do mechanical weapons not make a good topic for some girl talk?* Eleanora continued with a sad—no, exasperated—look. “You’re already so strong. What else are you trying to battle?”

“I just want the weapons because they’re cool. I’m not a member of a warrior race or anything.”

“But you think like a warrior—you want to fight those who are stronger than you.”

“I’m not going out of my way to find someone stronger than me. It’s just that I *know* I’m the strongest, so I can’t forgive anyone spreading lies about being stronger than me.”

“I think you’re the only person who could hold their own against you.”

I’m the only one who could hold their own against me? Is she talking about Yumiella 2? I was thinking of the Yumiella from the parallel world, but Eleanora believed 2 was a different person who just looked like me. It didn’t seem like she was referring to my doppelgänger, so she must have truly meant that I should fight myself.

“Me versus myself, huh?”

That meant I needed to fight a clone or copy of myself. I would be fighting someone who was the same as me in every sense, including having the same physical specs, level, and thought process.

Even if I tried to punch myself in the face, we’d have the same reach, so she’d probably use a cross counter. That was why I’d actually go for a low kick... *No, wait, she’s me, so she’d think the same thing.* Then I would anticipate that and deliver a flying kick...which she would also think to do.

Then what would happen if we took thinking out of the equation and resorted to mudslinging? There was no way a copy would stand up against the original me. *Well, she’ll think she’s actually the original...*

We’d both anticipate each other’s movements, and we’d make a move at the same time, only for it to be a misdirection and lead to another staring contest. *Maybe magic would... No, there can be a gap between casting a spell and it activating, so it’d be difficult to figure out the right timing...*

“Yumiella? Yumiella?!”

“Huh? What? What is it?” *Why is Eleanora calling my name? Actually, I don’t even remember her being here. Oh wait, right, we were in the middle of a conversation.* I’d accidentally gotten lost in thought, fighting against my imaginary clone.

“I’m sorry. I couldn’t stop my imagination from running wild.”

“This might be my fault for even bringing it up... It’s nothing you need to think about so seriously. It’s just a hypothetical.”

“But I keep thinking about those what-ifs.”

“There’s no use in thinking about it, you know? You can’t make a clone of yourself, nor can you split your single body into a right side and left side.”

“Right and left...?”

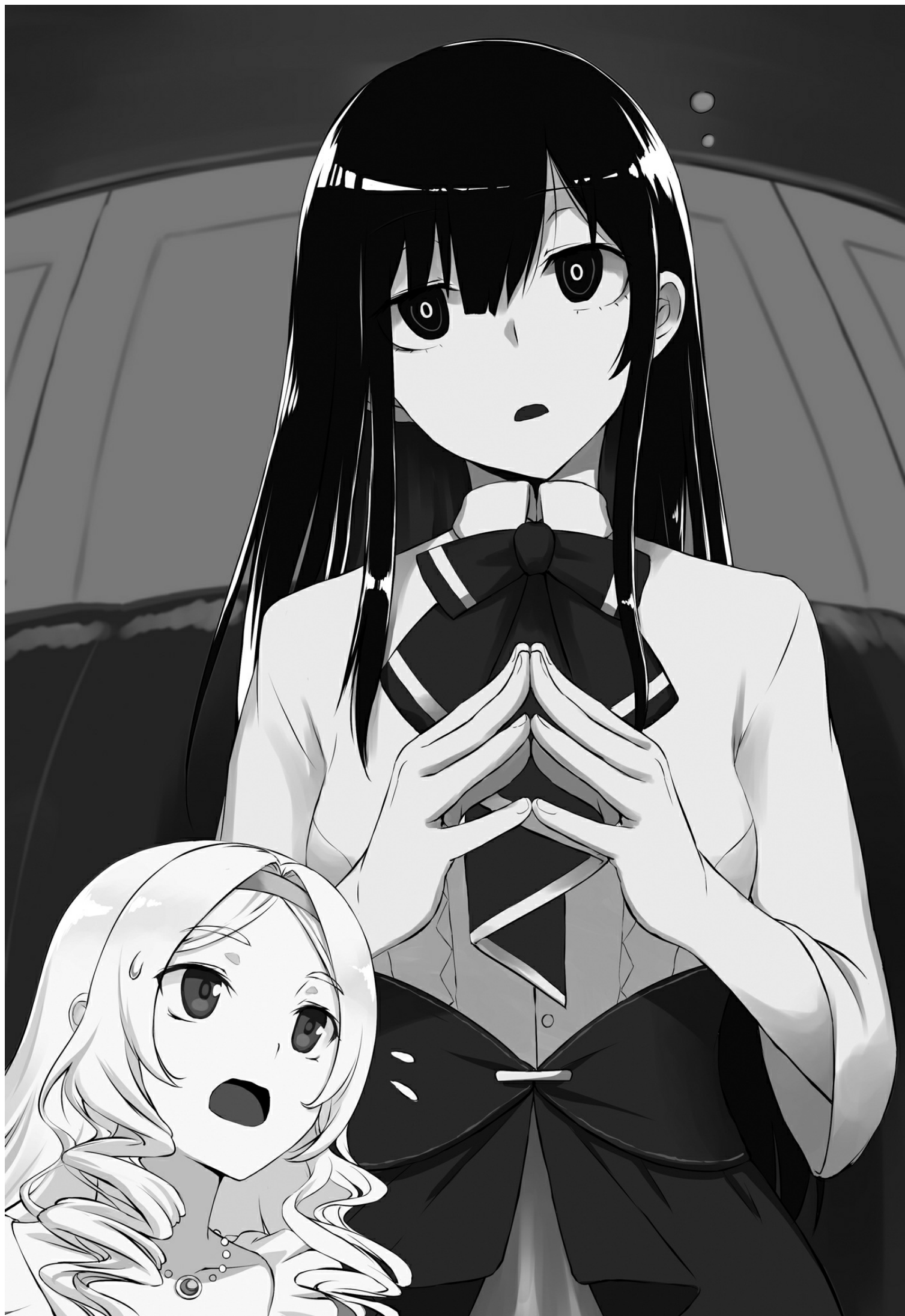
“Oh dear, I’ve really done it now.”

I see. Yumiella Dolkness is undoubtedly the strongest, ultimate force in the world, but it’s unclear whether Yumiella’s right or left side is stronger. I’m right-handed, so I think my right side is probably stronger. But I was also right-handed in my past life, yet my left hand had a stronger grip. The skilled right versus the powerful left...which is the ultimate force? What’s my current grip strength like? I wonder how different my right and left hands are.

“Yumiella! Yumiella?! It looks like I’m too late...”

I can’t just base it off of my hands. My heart is on my left side, and more of my liver is on the right side... What’s going on with my organs might also help determine which side is stronger. Spatial awareness, which is important for fighting, is governed by the right brain. So maybe the right side is more... Wait, but the right brain controls the left side of my body. The left brain is my right side’s ally, and the right brain is my left side’s ally, right? Since my nerves are crossed over, that would mean the same for my eyes. The information my right eye gets is sent to my left brain.

“Sir Patrick! Please help! Yumiella has set off into the world of her own imagination, and she’s not coming back!”



My dominant hand and dominant eye are both on my right, but I kick a ball using my left foot. Kicking in general is always with my left foot. That's why even if I have an advantage on my right with punches, kicks should be stronger on my left. Still, my right side might still be stronger... Oh, I still haven't figured out the issue of my nervous system being crossed over. I should figure out whom my right brain is allied with.

"Yumiella!" Patrick called out. "Yumiella! Daemon's brought extra reports for you to go over!"

"Here's a cookie, Yumiella..." Eleanora said. "Oh! She ate it!"

It didn't seem like I was going to figure out who was stronger: Right Yumiella or Left Yumiella. Mmm, cookie yummy. Oh right. I forgot about my mouth. It'll be difficult to talk with just half a mouth.

If my mouth was split down the middle, which would have an easier time talking? Magic doesn't require reciting chants to activate so I don't need my mouth for that, but it'll be important for coordinating attacks with others. I guess I'm trying to decide who would win between Right and Left Yumiella, so coordination isn't an issue. I guess I'll stop thinking about my mouth. Mmm, tea yummy.

"I tried bringing some tea up to her mouth, and she drank it!"

"So she's still conscious, and she's just in such a daze that she looks like she's lost consciousness."

"What shall we do about this, Sir Patrick?"

"Hm... I think we just have to wait until she returns to normal. For now let's put her to bed, and we'll decide what to do based on how she seems tomorrow..."

Wait, my left hand has my engagement ring, which is also a magical instrument. The wind-type magical energy that Patrick filled the ring with might tip the scales of victory. Wind... That would mean a cyclone, so wouldn't it be weird for my left side to have it? Wind should be on the right side. Should I move my engagement ring to my right hand?

“Rita! Rita! We’re free to do Yumiella’s makeup all we want right now!” Eleanora exclaimed. “She won’t notice if we wash it off in the bath!”

“Why has Lady Yumiella’s soul left her body?” Rita asked.

“It hasn’t, she’s just busy with a battle going on in her imagination. There’s no use worrying about it.”

I love asymmetrical robots, but I myself am a mostly symmetrical human. Still, even though I might be symmetrical, my right and left sides aren’t exactly the same. That’s why it’s more difficult to figure out who would win than in a battle versus a copy of myself.

“She won’t be like this all night, will she...?” Rita asked.

“Is she asleep with her eyes open?” Eleanora asked next.

Okay, then. I’ve finished sorting through the requirements, so it’s time to actually make Right Yumiella and Left Yumiella fight in my mind.

“Right versus Left!” I suddenly exclaimed. “Begin!”

“It doesn’t seem like she’s asleep,” Patrick remarked.

“You’re right. She just hasn’t returned yet.”

Suddenly, day had turned to night, and I was in my bed. Before I even knew it, I’d fallen asleep.

Chapter 1: The Hidden Boss (Left Side) Awakens in the Kingdom of Twilight

When I woke up, the room was dim. *When did I fall asleep?* I wondered as I rubbed my left eye and sat up, only to find that I was outside. *What a wild way to wake up.* I scanned my surroundings, assuming I'd just sleepwalked into the garden, but I was completely stunned.

"Huh? No, really. Where am I?" I had woken up in a truly unfamiliar place. I had no idea where I was, let alone which part of the world this could be.

I looked down at myself and saw I was in my usual dress. *Did I change out of my pajamas and... Wait. Did I even change into my pajamas last night? My memories are foggy.*

Before me was an expansive red wasteland. There were no buildings or plants in sight, only reddish-brown boulders and sand-covered land.

One might refer to this as That Time I Woke Up in a Red Desertlike Place.

Joking aside, the shade I used to describe this place—the color of the rocks and sand—was probably not the area's original color. It seemed that the sun was red, and the red light from the sun was spilling over the horizon and shining onto the wasteland. But was the sun setting or rising? *Taking into account the time I spent sleeping, it's probably the glow of sunrise.*

Since I was involved in this mysterious phenomenon of waking up in an unknown location, I probably couldn't trust my own sense of time. As I looked out at the red world and sorted through my thoughts, I realized something—I clearly had jumbled memories.

I could recall what had happened up to yesterday afternoon, but I had no clear memory of what had taken place last night. I had vague memories of eating something, of having makeup put on me, and of being manhandled as I was put to sleep, but it all felt like a dream.

I guess I'll figure out what time it is eventually. If the sun goes up, it's early morning, and if it goes down, it's evening. There's a fifty-fifty chance, I thought, voicing my guess like I was placing a bet.

"This one is...a sunrise!"

"Is that how you see it?" a voice asked out of nowhere from my right side.

Shocked, I turned to my right and saw a blond young man standing right beside me. *How did I not notice him until now?* I made sure to raise my guard as I faced him.

I looked the mysterious young man up and down and saw that he was a king. His outfit looked like army clothes, but there were formal elements of aristocratic clothing included in various parts of his clothes. The western sword on his hips was overly decorated and looked to be for ceremonial use.

The biggest clue to his status was the golden crown on his head. His golden blond hair, which looked as soft as silk, also seemed to announce his regality.

"Where did you come from?" I asked.

"I've always been here. I just thought it would be best to watch over you until you calmed down. Everyone who comes here is confused at first."

"Is that so? I didn't notice you."

"Maybe I shouldn't have stood so far back. It probably didn't help that I was on your right side either."

I was sure I had scanned my surroundings and turned 360 degrees as soon as I'd woken up. *Do I have a blind spot...?*

Though this young man was definitely no ordinary man, I was happy that I wasn't the only one here. *I need to ask him where I am and find a way home. Did I teleport here, or was I kidnapped? Figuring out why I was moved can wait for later.*

As such thoughts ran through my mind, the man gazed into the distance, where the light was still spilling over the horizon. He stood with a tall, confident posture, but his expression was somber. I couldn't help but silently stare at his face.

After some time, the man dressed like a king noticed my gaze and spoke. “It’s rare for someone to stay composed upon arriving here... Welcome to the Kingdom of Twilight.”

“The Kingdom of Twilight?”

“Yes. This is a kingdom where the sun is constantly about to rise and where people’s regrets gather. I’m the king of this land.”

The Kingdom of Twilight...? I’ve never heard of it. Also, the sun never fully rises? What does that mean? I was definitely confused, but it probably wasn’t showing on my face at all. The man wasted no time and continued his explanation.

“Everyone refers to me as ‘King,’ but some call me ‘Hero’... You can call me whichever you’d like.”

“I see... Well, I know a king, so I’ll call you Hero.”

“Sure. And what’s your name?” He asked this naturally, but I had to think about it.

Was it okay for me to reveal my true identity of Yumiella Dolkness to him? I wasn’t sure why, but I was brought to some place I’d never heard of while I was asleep, and I wasn’t in the Kingdom of Valschein anymore. Stating my name in the neighboring kingdom of Lemlaesta would cause chaos, so it was best to use a fake name when I was somewhere that I’d achieved notoriety.

I’d introduced myself as Eleanora to Gilbert, Patrick’s older brother, but Eleanora was too close to me, and it was hard to respond when someone called me by that name. *I don’t really want to use my name from my past life... Maybe I can use the player name I used in games? But being called “RedBeanMochi” out loud makes it feel like an offline gathering for online friends, and it’s embarrassing. Why don’t I use this opportunity to come up with a really cool name?*

Though I gave my response a lot of thought, I thought it would be suspicious if I took too long to answer, so I quickly introduced myself.

“My name is Joker.”

Shoot. Joker? Really? That should be your last choice. That's so embarrassing. It's so cringe. I feel like my face is on fire.

The self-proclaimed hero took my cringey name seriously. "It's nice to meet you, Joker."

"It's Yumiella. Yumiella. That's my real name, so please call me Yumiella."

"Huh? Is Joker a family name? Yumiella Joker?"

"It's Yumiella Dolkness. Please forget about Joker."

I shouldn't have introduced myself as Joker. The only ones allowed to use the name Joker are clowns, phantom thieves, metal bands, and... I guess that's a lot. Still, I have to be careful. Who knows what'll trigger a relapse and turn me into an edgelord again.

My current location was the still-unfamiliar kingdom known as Twilight. Had the name of Yumiella reached these lands...?

Surprisingly, my first name wasn't what caught the hero's attention.

"I've heard the name 'Dolkness' before. Where do I know it from...? I think it was the name of a yeoman to a count."

"I think that might be a different family with the same name. My family holds the rank of count in the Kingdom of Valschein."

"Oh! You're a noble lady from Valschein!" The man seemed happy to hear the name of my kingdom. *First Dolkness and now Valschein—this guy reacts to the weirdest things.*

Though his reactions were strange, I was glad that he seemed to know of my home kingdom. I'd been worried that I'd traveled so far that no one would know where Valschein was, but those fears were wiped away in an instant.

The hero was as excited as someone going, "We're from the same place!" *Maybe he's involved with the kingdom. I can probably get home right away.*

"So you know of the Kingdom of Valschein?"

"Of course. My knowledge is quite old, though, so I don't know how it's currently doing."

“What’s the distance between Twilight and Valschein? I’d like to know the way back.”

“The way back? To Valschein?”

“Well, yes... Oh, you might not believe me, but I woke up and was suddenly here. I should’ve been in Valschein.”

I was aware that my story sounded unrealistic, but I just wanted to know the way back, so it wasn’t really an issue if he didn’t believe me. But, or I should say as expected, he responded in a way I didn’t anticipate.

“I understand. That’s the sort of place this kingdom is.”

“What sort of place?”

“It’ll take a while to discuss the Kingdom of Twilight. Let me first take you to somewhere you can rest. The settlement is a short walk from here.”

This desert looks like an empty wasteland. Is there really a settlement here? I took another look at the red desert, and the hero pointed at a rocky mountain behind us. It was the opposite direction of the sun.

“People are gathered behind there, in the shade of the mountain. Don’t worry—there are a lot of strange characters there, so I’m sure they’ll accept you.”

“Oh, black hair must be rare here too.”

Having black hair was especially rare in the Kingdom of Valschein and its surrounding area, but it was also somewhat rare in the entire world. My appearance was bizarre no matter where I was.

Having figured out what he meant, I realized that the hero was staring at me. His gaze was focused on my head. He observed my hair as he slowly moved around me. He was on my right side, but he passed by in front of me and looked at my left. His eyes were now locked on the back of my head.

After some time, he finally spoke. “It’s true,” he mumbled as if his thoughts were spilling out. “Your hair really is completely black.”

“You weren’t referring to my hair when you said they’d accept me?”

“There are stranger things than your— Never mind. Don’t worry about it. The

Kingdom of Twilight accepts all.”

Is there anything else strange about me besides my hair and eye color?

Wondering if there was something on my face, I touched my left cheek, but nothing felt off. I looked down and everything looked the same. My left hand and left leg had nothing wrong with them.

I’d rather you just finish your thought since you already started it... Before I could complain, he urged me to walk towards the settlement.

“It’s this way. Let’s hurry. They say it isn’t good to be out in the sun for too long.”

“It hasn’t even risen though.”

“That’s just the kind of place this is.”

It felt like we weren’t quite on the same page, but I followed him regardless, and we headed for the other side of the rocky mountain.

We kept walking along the hard terrain of the red wasteland. I’d only noticed this now, but I was wearing shoes. *I even changed out of my pajamas, so maybe someone dressed me... Or I did it myself and just don’t remember.* The mystery of waking up in an unfamiliar location was still a mystery.

The scenery didn’t change as we walked, so I stared at my shoes that I had no recollection of putting on. I suddenly looked up and my eyes met those of the hero, who’d been walking ahead of me. He looked at me with concern.

“You walk in an interesting way.”

“Oh, yes. I’ll make sure to look up as I walk.”

“That’s not what I...” The hero suddenly trailed off and turned back around.

He implied that I was strange earlier too. Is there something weird about me? Should I just tell him to clearly say whatever is on his mind?

Before I could say anything, the hero spoke, still facing forward. “I had an old friend that was similar to you.”

“Excuse me...?”

“He had jet-black hair. I couldn’t tell at first because of the lighting and the

way he was facing, but it was a pure, deep black, and it surprised me. He had an air similar to you as well. Ah, he was a really good guy.”

From the way he spoke, this friend had probably passed. Though the hero spoke cheerfully, I couldn’t tell what kind of face he was currently making. *The way he reminisces on his black-haired friend kind of reminds me of...*

“He was a really fun guy. I thought we’d never see each other again, but we actually reunited recently.”

What the heck? He’s not dead? You were totally giving off the vibe of someone grieving their passed friend. We hadn’t spoken for very long, but I could tell that this man was a bit of an airhead. *The fact that he claims he’s a hero is also proof. Maybe he’s also just a self-proclaimed king.*

“Oh, so he’s alive?”

“Who is?”

“Your friend that I remind you of.”

“We were recently reunited. The answer should be obvious.”

The hero was definitely an airhead, and it still felt like we weren’t on the same page. *Maybe I was teleported somewhere super far—somewhere where people’s ideas of how to conduct small talk are different.*

We made our way around the rocky mountain to the settlement in the mountain’s shadow. Since the sun hadn’t risen, the shade was on the western side of the mountain.

The ground hidden by the mountain was black, and people were gathered there, as if to avoid the red, dimly lit wasteland.

“*This is the settlement...?*”

There were definitely people, but the sight before me was completely different from what I would imagine when hearing the word “settlement.”

First, there were no structures. There were just people sprinkled across the area, sitting on the ground. There were a few man-made vaselike objects, but there weren’t many. It looked like a group of students were just gathered in the

school courtyard, and I was speechless.

It appeared that I'd come to a ridiculous kingdom. The king turned around to face me and smiled as he held out his right hand to shake mine.

"Welcome to the Kingdom of Twilight. This is the area where the most people are gathered, so we call it a settlement. These people don't like the sunlight, so they usually spend their time here."

I had come up with a convenient explanation: these people all had homes elsewhere, and they gathered here in the morning to do radio calisthenics together, and they just called that gathering spot a settlement. But the hero's words made such an explanation impossible.

My brain wasn't processing the situation fast enough, and I'd forgotten that he wanted to shake hands. I just stared at his hand as he held it out.

The hero suddenly gasped and pulled his hand away. "Oh, my apologies... Once again, welcome." This time, he extended his left hand. *It's not that I don't want to shake your right hand specifically, you know?*

I didn't have it in me to point that out amid my confusion, so I just shook his hand, the current situation still feeling unreal.

"Thank you," I responded.

I looked up at the hero's face, which was only half lit. His gentle and regal expression befitting of the crown he wore was still there, but I felt something unstable behind it all.

Okay, then. Though they call it a settlement, all I can do here is sit on the ground and rest. I need to hurry up and ask about the way to Valschein so I can escape this strange kingdom.

I let go of his hand and was just about to ask about the geography here when someone called out to us. It was one of the residents gathered in the shade.

"That spot is dangerous! Come over here, quickly!"

I looked over, wondering what could be the problem, and saw a middle-aged man with cat ears screaming. *Huh? A middle-aged man with cat ears? A middle-aged catboy? What's going on?*

“You too, King! You’re in danger!”

No matter how many times I looked, I saw a middle-aged man with cat ears. There was a human, a middle-aged man with cat ears sprouting from the top of his head. Including his pair of human ears, he had a total of four.

He keeps yelling about how it’s dangerous over here, but I think his presence is the most dangerous thing right now.

“Why are you just standing there?! Hurry up and come over here!”

Yup, he’s definitely a middle-aged catboy.

It probably wasn’t fair to dismiss his cat ears just because he was a middle-aged man. Everyone had their own sense of fashion. As long as it wasn’t harming others, people should be free to dress however they pleased.

Still, I feel like a middle-aged catboy makes everything unpleasant for everyone else. Oh, I guess that’s the same logic people use when they unreasonably ask someone to change from a skirt into pants. I guess even if it’s a little hard to accept, the middle-aged catboy should be allowed to exist.

I was determined to accept the middle-aged catboy in the name of diversity, and I decided to first try complimenting him.

“Those ears are lovely.”

“Hurry up and— Hee hee, do you really think so, meow?”

Okay, even if I can accept the cat ears, the “meow” is criminal. He should definitely be arrested. Are the law enforcement agencies of Twilight functioning?

The cat-eared man did a “cute” gesture, curling his hand like a cat’s paw, out of embarrassment and effectively committed another crime before returning to the stern look he originally had.

“Forget my ears. Get over here!”

“Okay...”

He’d been urging us over to the shaded area. *If he’s concerned because the UV rays in this area are strong enough to insta-kill you, then I’d be worried too.*

The man didn't seem that concerned though, so it didn't really feel like I was in danger. Still, if I didn't get in the shade, I wouldn't be able to have a proper conversation with the cat-eared man. *I don't actually want to have a proper conversation with him, though... I guess I have no choice.* I stepped into the shade known as the settlement.

"Is this all right?" I asked.

"Oh, thank goodness. Does anything feel...?" The man inspected me from top to bottom and fell silent in the middle of his sentence. *What is it? Did I get really badly sunburned or something?* I looked at my left hand and saw nothing wrong.

"Is there something on my face?" I asked.

"Oh, no. I'm sorry for staring...meow."

"You don't have to force yourself to act like a cat."

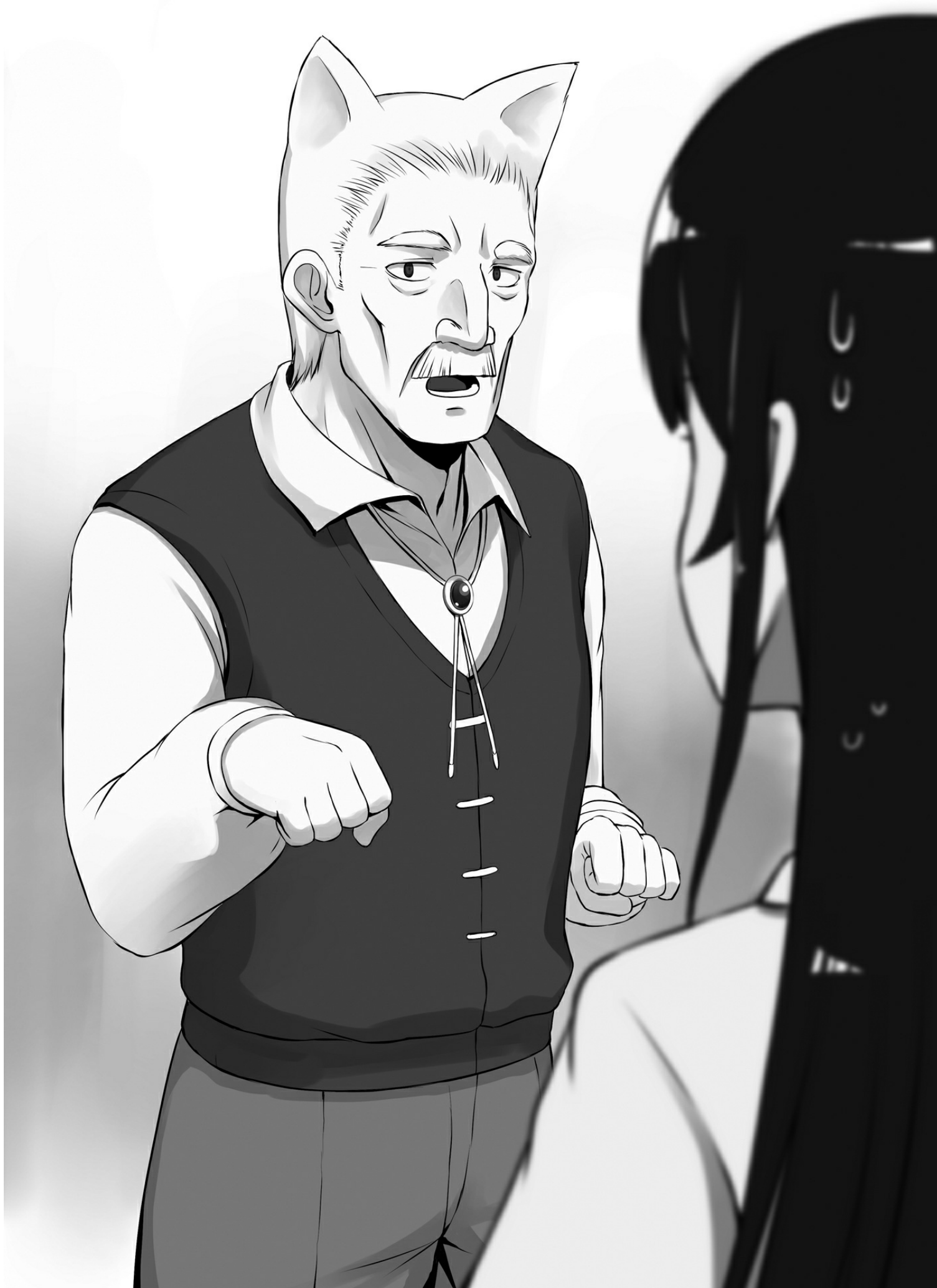
"I don't think I've seen you around before. How long have you been here *fur*, meow?" The cat-eared man, who showed a glimpse of his regular self, ignored my comment.

It seemed like there was no point in trying to get through to him. *There's a weirdo here—please do something about it. That's the king's job, isn't it?* I turned to look at the hero, who had just stepped into the shaded area. He spoke, but he didn't touch on the older man's manner of speech.

"She's just arrived in Twilight. I happened to be there when she arrived."

"You were out walking in the sunlight again?" the cat-eared man asked with concern. "If anything were to happen to you, we would all be terribly saddened. Please look out for yourself more. I beg of you to stay in the shade of the mountain."

Mr. Cat Ears can totally speak normally...



I was well aware that there was no use in trying to get him to stop, so I decided to continue without pointing out his speech pattern.

“You were telling us to come into the shade earlier. Is it bad to be in the sun?”

“It’s the word of the great god. If we don’t stay in the shade, something terrible will happen to all of us, meow.”

Oh, so it’s just your religion. That’s pretty different from banning any contact with sunlight. Still, I wasn’t quite satisfied with why they were gathered in the shade provided by the rocky mountain. *It’s only shaded for now, right?*

“What would you do if the sun rose to right above this spot? You don’t seem to have any structures with roofs.”

“It’s always evening here, meow.”

“No, you’re wrong,” the hero chimed in. “It’s morning. The sun is about to rise.”

“There you go again, King... The sun will eventually set, meow. You need to give up already, meow.”

It’s always evening? But the hero says it’s early morning? Oh, I get it now! This kingdom must be experiencing midnight suns. That happens on Earth too—regions close to the north pole spend summers where the sun never fully sets. The sun just revolves around the horizon. That means if you spend twenty-four hours walking around the mountain, you’ll always be in the sunlight. This must be religious activity limited to the summer—it all makes sense now. Their king must be a nonbeliever.

The midnight sun would also explain why they were arguing whether it was morning or evening. I was starting to understand the mysterious settlement a little more, and I was starting to feel comfortable.

Sorry for being so harsh towards you, Mr. Cat Ears. After giving your cat ears and speech quirk another thought... No, never mind. I still don’t like it. Though those cat ears really do look real. The fine, silky hairs look exactly like a cat’s—it’s like they could move at any mome—

“They moved!” I yelped.

“Meow?!”

I’d suddenly raised my voice, which made the cat-eared man’s cat ears flatten on his head, like a cat that was scared. *They’re real ears! Have beastkin existed in this world this whole time?! Stop adding things that suddenly change the world-building this late in the game.*

“Are those ears real?” I asked.

“They’re attached to my head, meow. I’m sure it’s an un-fur-miliar sight to someone new, meow.”

“Can I touch them...?”

“B-Be gentle, meow.”

What is this feeling? Both “Yay! I’m so happy!” and “I’m gonna punch you!” are feelings that exist within me without any contradiction. What should I do? I guess he said it’s okay, so I guess I’ll touch them.

I reached my left hand out to the man’s cat ears. I poked them with my pointer finger, and they were cool to the touch. *This. This is what a cat’s ear should be like! They’re real.* The way he twitched when I touched his ear made me fully cringe because of the middle-aged part of his catboy-ness, but his cat ears still felt relaxing to touch.

“They’re actually real.”

“I was overworked for a long time, meow. That’s why when I came to this kingdom, I wanted to live a laid-back life, just like a cat, meow.”

“I see... How did these ears sprout on your head?”

“I was overworked for a long time, meow. That’s why when I came to this king —”

“I got it already, thanks.”

If he became a cat because he wanted to, I should’ve turned into a Tyrannosaurus by now.

We would’ve had a proper conversation if he didn’t have that speech quirk, and he was starting to not make sense, so I looked away from the cat ears and

looked down. My left heel was right on the border of the sunlight and shade, which hadn't moved since I'd entered the settlement.

"Huh?" That's strange. I've looked at a sundial in the past, but they actually move pretty quickly.

Though the man and I had talked for a short period, it normally only took a few minutes for shadows to move a noticeable amount. *Though it's not that the shadows aren't moving. It's actually the sun's position that...*

"No way." I quickly rushed out of the shade and ran somewhere the sun was visible. The cat-eared man was telling me to come back, but I ignored him and went to check the sun.

To my disbelief, the sun wasn't visible. It hadn't risen or set. The same amount of light was peeking over the horizon as when I'd first woken up.

If it's a midnight sun, then it should move parallel to the horizon... And shadows should still move because of that.

Paying no mind to the middle-aged catboy shouting at him from the shade, the hero slowly walked up to me.

"What concerns you?" he asked in a gentle voice as he stood beside me.

"The sun. The sun hasn't moved at all."

"That's right. This is the Kingdom of Twilight. The sun is always about to rise. It's not day nor is it night. It's a half-baked kingdom."

If this kingdom is on a planet, that would be impossible unless... With the unbelievable facts laid out before me, I pinched my left cheek.

"It doesn't hurt. Is this...a dreamland?"

"No, I think it doesn't hurt because your sense of pain has dulled."

Womp, womp. It seems that this isn't a dreamland. He's right, though—I might have to try to tear off my cheek before I feel any pain.



The cat-eared man called us back into the shade, and I returned to the settlement. Still unsure of where we were headed, I followed the hero as we

walked around. Though the hero had immediately rejected it, my dream theory was starting to feel possible.

Mr. Cat Ears, who I'd thought was quite an intense character for the first NPC I'd run into, was actually relatively normal. As I walked around the settlement, I saw that there were strange beings on a whole different level than a middle-aged man with cat ears. There was someone who didn't just have dog ears but was a complete furry. There was someone who looked like a Buddhist Asura, someone else over five meters tall, and another person with eyes so big that they took up over half of their face. The settlement was full of people who couldn't exist in the real world. *This is definitely a dreamland.*

If this wasn't a dream, then maybe it was an otherworld. There were apparently countless worlds, so it would be possible for a world like this to exist.

But the hero knew of the Kingdom of Valschein, and it's normal to first assume you're in the same world... Hm. I still don't get it.

The hero seemed to be guiding me somewhere, and spoke to me without looking back. "What do you think of Twilight?"

"There are lots of strange people here."

"There sure are. No matter what someone ends up looking like, the Kingdom of Twilight accepts all. That includes you."

No one probably cared about my black hair when they were holding a nonhuman's expo convention here.

Just as the hero said, there was a laid-back, peaceful atmosphere in the settlement. There were very few man-made objects, but there were several raggedy chair-like objects. Even without the chairs, plenty of people found boulders to sit on as they chatted among each other.

Also, just like in the real world, there were stray cats here.

"Kitty!" I exclaimed at the cat. I surprisingly got a response...from the middle-aged catboy.

"Did you call for me, meow?"

I wanted to tell him to shut up in a deep voice and punch the cat-eared man into oblivion, but actual kitties didn't like deep sounds or violence. *I have to hold back. I'm going to endure the presence of the imposter for the sake of the beautiful, adorable, real kitty.*

Atop the red sand stood a calico with the perfect distribution of white, brown, and black fur. The kitty's tail stood up pin straight, and it walked up to me like a model walking a catwalk. *Oh, you're so adorable!* Once the kitty got close enough to me and noticed my presence, it would surely run from me. Ever since I'd reincarnated as Yumiella Dolkness, every type of animal including insects were overly terrified of me.

I just want to pet them a little. Why do they all run away? It's not like there's any downside to me petting them. It's fine, though. I can't force them. I'm happy just watching them from afar.

The great kitty walked elegantly as if it owned the Kingdom of Twilight, and the calico finally noticed me. The kitty took a quick glance at me as if it weren't interested, then looked away immediately. But then it walked up to my left foot and flopped onto the ground.

"Huh...?"

"I think he wants you to pet him, meow." That was something I would've usually understood, but I only realized it after hearing the cat-eared man say it.

This calico wants to be pet, and by me of all people. The kitty showed no signs of being afraid, and it purred as it relaxed on the ground. *Can I pet you, kitty? I won't hurt you. I'll be gentle. If we get along, maybe I can take you home with me? Just kidding...unless?*

The calico still hadn't run from me, and he was now grooming himself. I was probably more nervous than the cat. *I mean, I haven't petted a cat since becoming Yumiella. I'm great at imagining creepy scenarios, but my real-life experience hasn't caught up.*

Okay...I'm going to pet it. I'm finally gonna pet you, kitty. I couldn't prevent a laugh of bliss from escaping my lips.

"Hee hee, hee hee hee."

“Your laugh is creepy, meow.”

“I’m gonna touch you with my hands now, kitty.”

“There’s something indecent about the way you’re talking too, meow.”

Determined to pet the cat, I extended my left hand, but the calico evaded my touch and got up to walk away.

“Huh?!”

“Cats are fickle. He waited a bit, but it didn’t seem like you were going to pet him, so he got fur-ustrated, meow.”

What...? No way. You’re saying that I missed an opportunity to pet a cat not because of my level or my dark magical energy but because I took too long to make a decision?

“I think I’m going to regret that for the rest of my life.”

“You shouldn’t say things like that so casually,” the hero said, slightly irritated. I was aware that I was exaggerating, but I didn’t think it called for him to react that way.

The air between us had gotten a little tense, but the cat-eared man spoke with no sense of nervousness. “That calico is my only other cat fur-riend here. He’s kind of like my older brother, meow.” I wasn’t sure if he intentionally tried to repair the bad mood, but for the first time I was grateful the middle-aged catboy was here.

“Is that so?” the hero responded. “I think that you’re the older brother, and the calico is the younger brother.”

“You always say that, King. But I have a better sense of these things when it comes to cats, meow.”

Well, I think you’re not brothers at all, just strangers.

I was surprised that the calico was male. For genetic reasons, most calicos were females, and males were so rare that they were sold for high prices.

The calico in question seemed like he was just bored with me after all, and after leaving my side, he was walking around as his tail slowly wiggled from side

to side. *He's adorable even from the back.*

We tried to watch the cat as it walked off without chasing it, but the middle-aged catboy suddenly ran off as if he'd remembered something.

"Oh no, meow! He might try to use the painter girl's cat-vas as a scratching board, meow!"

"See?" the hero said, turning to me. "He's more of the older brother, isn't he?"

No, they're complete strangers. I won't stand for the adorable cat and the weird man being blood relatives. I kept my thoughts to myself and joined the hero to chase after one cat and one human.

"We made it, meow." The cat-eared man immediately caught the calico, who was obediently being held in the man's arms. *This cat's okay with being held too?*

Led by the cat, we had come all the way to the opposite edge of the settlement. The whole area was filled with unusual things, but there was one thing here that stood out more than everything else.

There was a woman who was painting something. She was frantically dragging her brush along a canvas. That was probably the "cat-vas" that the calico was going to use as a scratching board.

The most notable thing was how her painting looked. It was...incredibly artistic—artistic in the way that Picasso's works were, where I couldn't really tell what she was painting.

I couldn't help but stand still and watch. I didn't really understand abstract art, but I somehow instinctually felt real art wasn't like that. Depending on how you looked at the painting, it could look like a person, or a starry sky, or an assortment of skewered and grilled meats—it was a strange piece of art.

I observed her painting that kept drawing me in, and the painter spoke without putting her brush down. "There's nothing fun about looking at such horrible art."

“No, you’re wrong. It’s so artistic.”

“I’ve heard that countless times!” she screamed, shaking her head so that her long hair thrashed around. “I want to paint something realistic—something true to life!”

Realistic? Like, photorealism? Photos were the complete opposite of the abstract art she was painting. Though it was true that realistic portraits were popular because photographs didn’t exist in Valschein.

No matter how I look at it, it’s an incomprehensible—no, artistic, not incomprehensible—painting. Though, if she’s trying to paint realistically and this is the result, she might not actually have any talent... As I struggled to come up with a response, the woman turned back to look at me.

“You all go on about how my pieces are artistic, but that’s just because you can’t understand them, isn’t it?! What’s truly incredible is art that looks like a copy of reality!”

“No, your art *is* true to life—it depicts reality as it is,” I said.

I wasn’t lying just to console her—I said it because her painting was really like a photograph. The painter’s face had crazy proportions. Her features were laid out as if they were all flat—it was a Picasso-like face. Not that she looked like Picasso himself, but her face was similar to those that he painted.

The Kingdom of Twilight is filled with unusual people, but I never expected to meet someone with a Picasso face.

The truly Picassoesque woman said in a nervous voice, “Really? Does this painting actually look like reality?”

“It’s true. I can’t tell the difference.”

Though photorealistic art existed, if you observed them closely, you could tell that they were paintings or drawings. However, I couldn’t tell the portrait in front of me apart from reality. More accurately, I couldn’t tell the difference between the art that looked like scribbles, and a reality that was indiscernible as reality.

The woman, who looked like she’d been lifted from a canvas, was probably

looking at me as she spoke. “You really mean it? This art is realistic?”

“A reality similar to art... Sorry, I misspoke. It’s art similar to reality.”

“I see. It’s taken so long. Finally—I’ve finally...” Her bizarre face turned back to look at her bizarre painting. She extended her hand and gently touched the piece of art. Her dainty fingers that were dirty with paint began to change.

The red paint on her palms and the blue paint stuck between her nails slowly began to take over the human parts of her body. I stood there stunned, and before I knew it, her hand looked similar to a familiar painting.

“U-Um, your hand...”

The woman seemed to pay no mind to the change to her body and only now looked at her own hand. She compared her hand to the painting, which was now depicted in a similar style.

“Finally. I’ve finally painted my ideal piece. I tossed away the style I hated so much for so long, and I finally painted something that looks like I cut out a piece of reality.”

It’s your hand that’s changed, not your art style. That thought was difficult to voice, and there was a strange air to the woman now. I felt like something bad was going to happen, and the cat-eared man and calico in his arms both had flattened ears. The king was the only one to go closer to the painter.

“I’ve finally painted a piece I’m satisfied with, King.”

“I’m happy to hear it. I’ve been a fan of your work. I’m very happy for you. What kind of piece are you going to try painting next?”

“I’m satisfied now. This is the last one.”

“Why? Your life as a painter is just beginning. You can paint as much as you want in this kingdom.”

“Thank you, King. But I’m all right. I drew so many pieces in Twilight. I had fun.”

I couldn’t read the expression on her face, but I could tell she was happy. But I could read the look on the king’s face—he seemed incredibly sad.

It was then that the canvas began to crumble. The paint peeled off and disappeared, and red sand began to pour onto the ground from the canvas. The legs of the easel also crumbled before the canvas fell over, and both became one with the red, sandy earth.

The piece I'd been so focused on had disappeared, and I stood there, shocked and in a daze as I stared at the artist. The same thing that happened to the canvas was happening to the painter. Her body was turning into sand as it crumbled. The woman herself seemed to be at peace and accepted the phenomenon as if it were a natural occurrence.

"Don't look so sad, King. Since there's no pain, this is much better than death."

"Why do you have to go?" the hero asked. "Soon it'll be morning in the Kingdom of Twilight. We're just getting started."

"I'm sorry. For me, it seems that night has fallen. This is an evening dusk, not a morning dawn." Those were her final words before she completely crumbled away. She turned into silent red sand and became one with the earth.

I expected there to be a mound of sand, roughly the size of a person, but not even that was left behind. There were no remnants of the woman, and she'd completely disappeared.

The king fell to his knees at the spot where she once stood and took a moment to silently pray. I also followed his lead and bowed my head. Though I looked like I was praying, instead of sadness for her disappearance, my mind was racing with the reason it had happened.

Were there others about to disappear? Was I going to turn into sand too? My eyes darted around nervously.

The cat-eared man then quietly said, "The residents of this kingdom all had regrets at the end of their lives. When those regrets are gone, they disappear, just like she did..."

I guess he drops the quirk when he's serious.

"...meow."

You don't have to force yourself, man. Regardless, thanks to him, I was now sure of it.

"This kingdom is the afterlife... I-I died..."

For some time, I'd had a feeling that this might be the afterlife. I'd woken up in a completely different place, and waking up in the afterlife made more sense than teleporting to a distant land. There was also a low chance that I was reincarnated once more.

I didn't know the afterlife existed. This is my second time dying, but it's the first I've heard of it. My first death was a traffic accident, and my second was... Why did I die? Sure, a regular old college student will die if she's hit by a car, but how do you kill Yumiella Dolkness?

I was fine when I reentered the atmosphere from space with nothing but the clothes on my back, and I would probably be fine even if I drowned in a smelting furnace. With that said, it would take something quite mighty for me to be dead. *What is it...?* I couldn't come up with anything, nor could I confirm if I was right with my memories fuzzy.

"I don't remember how I died..."

"That's just how it is, meow. Be-fur I knew it, I woke up here, meow."

"Do all dead people come here?"

Mr. Cat Ears's face clouded over upon hearing my question. He probably knew what I wanted to find out.

"It's hard for me to say this, but you shouldn't try to reunite with anyone important to you." The man forgot to use his speech quirk again, but I wasn't satisfied with his response.

I mean, after several decades, Patrick and Eleanora will reach the end of their lifespans, and they'll have to come here.

"But this is the afterlife, right? As long as I wait, I'll be reunited with Patrick, right?!"

The cat-eared man just silently shook his head.

Why not?

The one to answer my question was the king of Twilight, who'd finished his silent prayer. "The Kingdom of Twilight is indeed beyond death, but it isn't *the* afterlife. Let me explain this world to you."

The calico meowed, but I couldn't react to the sound of a cat I loved so much. I simply listened intently to what the hero had to say.

Chapter 2: The Hidden Boss (Right Side) Awakens in Her Room

When I woke up, the room was dim. I peeked between the curtains to look outside and saw that there was a little bit of light, which meant that I'd probably woken up earlier than usual. It was before sunrise—right around the time that the eastern sky began to gradually grow brighter.

It was rare for me to wake up this early. The early morning was chilly since it was winter, but waking up naturally felt refreshing. I was in my bed in my room, and I sat up and stretched out both my arms... *Huh?*

"Is it asleep?" I'd tried to stretch my arms up, but my left hand just dangled by my side. It had no sensation either. *Maybe my arm's asleep because I slept in a weird position?*

I tried massaging my left hand with my right, but...there really wasn't any sensation in it. I couldn't even move a single finger on my own, and my left hand was just letting my right do whatever to it.

It isn't just asleep—it's in deep sleep.

"Wow... Hey! Someone come here and look. It's amazing!" I wanted to tell someone about my hibernating hand. The first person that came to mind was my beloved Patrick.

It's really early, but I want to shake him awake and show him what's going on.

I jumped out of bed to run to his room, but I lost my balance and fell to the ground. *That's weird—no, impossible. It's unusual for my balance to be so unstable that I trip just because I'm in a hurry.*

"It's my leg too," I said after inspecting my leg while still on the floor.

My left leg was incredibly asleep as well. I used my working hand to massage it, but there was no sensation at all. *No wonder I lost balance and fell to the left.*

After investigating my body with my working right hand, I found out that I had

no sensation whatsoever on my left side, from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. While still in disbelief, I checked my eyes and found that I couldn't see out of my left eye either. Half of my mouth wasn't working either, so it was a little difficult to speak.

"Is this caused by...my brain?" This wasn't the time to be joking about my falling asleep. I could've had a medical issue, like a stroke, while I was sleeping.

I should call an ambulance and... Wait. There aren't any phones, and there aren't hospitals that can check the blood vessels in my brain. That's okay—that's what handy-dandy recovery magic is for.

As long as they weren't caused by bacteria, viruses, or your own immune system, recovery magic was effective against most symptoms. I used my plethora of mana to cast recovery magic over my whole body.

Now I should be good as new. I stood up, then fell towards the left. My symptoms on the left side of my body were still there—magic hadn't worked.

I finally realized that I was facing an emergency.

"Somebody, help me!"

Rita, my maid, heard my SOS and came to save me. She'd been with me since I started living in the Academy dorms, and she was composed to the point that it wasn't easy to fluster her. Even while seeing her lord on the floor, she seemed completely unfazed.

"Good morning, Lady Yumiella."

"Morning."

"Did you wake up by falling out of bed again? If your sleep habits don't improve, you'll face difficulties once you start sharing a bed with Sir Patrick."

Despite the fact that I was on the floor with half of my body numb, my incredibly loyal servant didn't seem worried at all. *Yeah, maybe it's nothing out of the ordinary for me to be flipped upside down on the floor in the morning, but I wished she would've noticed something was off through some special lord-servant connection.* At this rate, she was going to ignore my crisis. I decided to properly ask for help.

“Help meee.”

“Of course, I’ll prepare your morning tea right away.”

Yeah, maybe it’s nothing out of the ordinary for me to say nonsensical things that are a waste of time to think about, but I wished she’d help me when I ask for help.

“Listen, Rita—this is serious.”

“You can’t use a giant cream puff as a pillow.”

“I’m not talking about the silly things I say while half asleep! Well, no, that one was serious.”

“What’s going on today?”

I was in a classic “boy who cried wolf” situation. I wanted to tell her about my symptoms, but Rita was giving me as much attention as someone insisting on a giant cream puff pillow. *On that note, something was wrong with me that day, even if I’d just woken up. No matter how big it is, a cream puff could never be a pillow because of the shape.*

“A jumbo éclair is more suited for a pillow, but the chocolate might turn my hair completely black,” I said.

“Yes, it might...”

“Oh, I guess my hair’s already black.”

“Well, I need to prepare tea, so—”

“Wait, wait! The left half of my body won’t move! I can’t use my arm or my leg, and I’m having trouble standing up!”



After that, Rita reacted quickly. With the help of another maid, I was laid back in my bed. By then, Patrick had been informed of the situation and rushed over.

Soon after, a doctor visited as well. The result of his exam was that the cause of my symptoms was unknown. Damage to the brain and nerves were treatable with top-tier potions, so the fact that recovery magic didn’t work meant that something else was the issue.

In that case, it seemed like it could be a muscle issue, but the doctor had never heard of a case where only one side of someone's body suddenly stopped working. My mind was working fine, and my right side was in picture-perfect health. As long as I hopped around on one leg, I could even get around on my own.

I could probably get back to my life, but I was told to keep resting for a bit. Under Patrick's supervision, I was currently lying in bed.

"Things got blown out of proportion," I said.

"It's a big deal for your body to stop moving," Patrick responded.

"It's only half my body. Oh, I guess right now my right half is stronger."

That's right. I was thinking about something like that yesterday. Though my right and left sides had seemed equally strong, the results of their battle were now clear. Right Yumiella was victorious, and Left Yumiella was dead on arrival.

"Now's not the time for that," Patrick said. "We should go to the Royal Capital and see the well-known doctors there. I'm sure you'll be able to move like before."

"Exactly. My body will eventually move again. There's no way that half a human's body could die. My left side is just sleeping."

Though we were both saying positive things, I could tell that we were both worried that I might stay like this forever. With just Patrick and me in the room, it was uncomfortably silent. The timing where our conversation had ended was awkward.

Just then, a cheery voice spoke up in the gloomy room. The owner of the voice appeared from where Patrick was standing, or more accurately, his shadow.

"Wooo! How are you doing, mister?! I'm doing great, since miss died!" Lemn, whom I hadn't seen in a while, was ecstatic in a way I'd never seen before. His words were also disturbing.

"Miss died?" *Which miss passed?* Lemn never referred to people by their names, so it was difficult to tell whom he was talking about. *I give my*

condolences to whoever it is.

With his spirits still high, Lemn turned to Patrick, who was stunned silent. “Now we can protect the order of the world! I mean, I’m grateful she took down the god of evil, but miss is much more dangerous than she is helpful. I thought it was all over when she sprouted wings that one time.” Lemn cackled, and Patrick still seemed confused.

I used just my right hand to sit myself up and tapped Lemn on the shoulder from behind. “What are you doing here all of a sudden? You usually don’t show yourself.”

“Hmm?” Lemn said, turning to me. “Oh, it’s you, miss. Like I said, I’m just glad that miss died... You’re alive?!” A tense expression washed over the god of darkness’s face as he stared at me.

It seemed that the “miss” he was talking about was me. *I mean, yeah, I’m alive? Why did he think I’d died?* Lemn began trying to poke me as if to confirm I wasn’t a ghost, which I blocked with my right hand.

“You’re really alive. Why?!”

“I want to know why you thought I’d died.”

“I was sure you were in the Kingdom of Twilight...” As he spoke, he trembled and continued to poke my right hand. After poking my hand several times, he tilted his head, confused. “Hmm. You’re definitely alive.”

“Why did you think I was dead? I haven’t been to this Kingdom of Twilight place either.”

“Maybe I made a mistake. Sorry for getting so excited over a misunderstanding.”

I’d rather you apologized for getting excited that I was dead, not making a mistake. I know that the foreign element of “Yumiella” is nothing but a nuisance to Lemn since he prioritizes world order over all, but he should hide his true feelings.

I was just exasperated, but Patrick seemed upset. Sensing the tension in the air, Lemn overtly tried to change the subject.

“What’s this? Why are you in bed, miss? Are you feeling unwell? That’s right, I came to check in on you.”

Lemn’s all too convenient excuse irritated me a bit, but I remembered my current situation. Perhaps he knew something about why only my left half wouldn’t move.

I choked down my anger and decided to tell him about the abnormality in my left side. I grabbed my limp left arm and let it dangle. “As you can see, when I woke up this morning, the left side of my body stopped moving.”

“Can I touch your left hand...?” Before I gave him permission, Lemn started poking my left hand. Unlike when he was touching my right hand earlier, I couldn’t feel his finger at all. His hands-on exam ended quickly, and the god just mumbled, “You’re dead.”

“Excuse me?”

“I see... Half of you must’ve gone to the Kingdom of Twilight...”

“What’s this Kingdom of Twilight you keep talking about...?”

Lemn fell silent for a bit, lost in thought, and he nodded to himself as if he were satisfied. I could tell that his misunderstanding that I was dead and my symptoms, though seemingly unrelated, had something to do with each other. But I didn’t know what this “Kingdom of Twilight” that kept popping up was. I wanted him to share what was going on if he’d figured it out, but Lemn’s serious look just turned into a smile.

“I don’t know either. Sorry I couldn’t be of more help. Bye!” he said all in one breath before turning towards Patrick’s shadow. *Oh, he’s trying to run.*

The powerless Lemn’s escape obviously wasn’t successful—Patrick had grabbed him by the scruff of his neck, keeping him from diving into the shadow. Not giving up, Lemn thrashed his limbs around to flee Patrick’s grasp, but he immediately ran out of breath and calmed down. He let out a sigh as he finally gave in.

Patrick began interrogating him, the god still hanging in the air by his scruff.

“Tell us what you know, Lemn.”

“Sure, where should I start?”

“Why did Yumiella’s body stop working?”

“Half of her body died. It was just half of her that’s in the Kingdom of Twilight.”

“The Kingdom of Twilight?” Patrick repeated. “Is that like the afterlife?”

“Nope. You need to die to go there, but it’s not the afterlife.”

What does that mean? If it’s somewhere dead people go, isn’t it the afterlife? Patrick shot me a look asking if I understood, but I had no clue so I shook my head.

“Are you saying nonsensical things to try and confuse us?” I asked.

“No, no. It doesn’t actually exist, but it definitely exists between this world and the afterlife...”

You could go after you died, but it wasn’t the afterlife, and it didn’t exist, but it did. Patrick and I just looked at each other after this clearly conflicting explanation.

Lemn continued his explanation, which just sounded like difficult philosophy. “It’s neither day nor night. The sun has set, but it’s bright. That’s why it’s the Kingdom of Twilight.”

That I can understand...but what you said before makes no sense,” I said.

“If I had some paper, I could explain it better...”

“Are you just saying that so you can escape?” I asked.

“I won’t run. Now that I think about it, you can pull me out of the shadows, miss. I won’t waste my time.” After being freed from Patrick’s grasp, Lemn said, “I’m just grabbing something,” before he pulled out a sheet of paper from the shadow.

Weird that he already has a paper ready to explain this, I thought as I looked at it. I thought there would be some words or a drawing on it, but the piece of paper was quite simple. It was split down the middle, half of it white and half of it black.

What is he going to explain using this black-and-white paper? I listened intently as he began to speak.

“This white side is the world of the living. You can call it this world or the mortal world if you’d like. The black side is the afterlife.”

“Is that black part the Kingdom of Twilight?” I asked.

“Nope. That’s the afterlife. Even I don’t know what’s there. Relative to this paper, the Kingdom of Twilight is neither the white nor the black side.”

It’s neither the white nor black part of the two-toned sheet of paper? There was no gray gradation, and there were only two options on the paper: bright white or dark black—in other words, there was only life or death.

Patrick and I looked at each other again, still not understanding.

“You guys are so thickheaded,” Lemn said with a snicker. “Maybe this will make it easier.” He then traced the border where the white met the black and a red line appeared. The black-and-white paper now had a red line running through the middle, separating the black and white sides. A red sunset that was neither day nor night had appeared.

“So it’s this red part,” I said.

“Yup. This is the Kingdom of Twilight. It’s on the border between this world and the afterlife.” *Huh. I didn’t know there was a place that was like being in the water of the River Styx.*

So this red line is the Kingdom of Twilight, I mused as I reached out and traced the border between this world and the afterlife. As I did that, just the parts of the red line that my finger traced disappeared. It didn’t seem like I’d wiped away the ink with my finger.

“It’s nice, isn’t it?” Lemn proudly said as I stared at my clean fingertip. “I made this paper. Try tracing the parts that disappeared again.”

I did as he said and traced the lineless part of the border once more, and the red line appeared. *Cool, this is fun.* I touched the mysterious paper over and over again, playing with it.

“Is there a point to this gimmick?” Patrick asked. “Couldn’t you just leave the

red line on it?”

That’s true. I was too busy playing with the paper to figure out why Lemn had made the paper this way, but he explained it right away.

“The concept is easier to understand with the red line, but the red line doesn’t actually exist. I’ll say it again—the part that is neither black nor white is the Kingdom of Twilight. You understand now, right?”

I recalled Lemn’s words from earlier.

“It doesn’t actually exist, but it definitely exists between this world and the afterlife...”

There weren’t any parts of the paper that weren’t black or white, but we could clearly see the line dividing the two sides. A line that was neither black nor white—a colorless line—with a width of zero did indeed exist.

“It looks like you got it,” Lemn said. “It’s on the border of this world and the afterlife, and its existence itself is unstable—that’s the Kingdom of Twilight.”

I wonder what kind of place it is. Though the equator was depicted as a red line on most maps, it wasn’t actually red—in the same vein, the Kingdom of Twilight probably wasn’t actually red. Since the name of the kingdom was probably referencing the border of life and death, it probably wasn’t always sunset like it suggested.

As I imagined what this place I’d never been to looked like, Patrick spoke up. “Am I correct to think that people go to the Kingdom of Twilight after dying?”

“Not everyone goes,” Lemn explained. “Only the people with strong regrets hang on and stay there. The world itself is unstable, so the residents’ human qualities also change shape.”

I can understand why people with strong regrets can’t fully die, but what does he mean that their qualities change? I decided to ask.

“Specifically what happens when the residents change shape?”

“This is just an example, but imagine there’s someone who lived a life of constant hard work and died from overworking themselves. If they regret not spending their last moments relaxing like a cat, those feelings could be reflected

on them in the Kingdom of Twilight.”

“So they could relax like a cat? That sounds like heaven.”

“Nope. This guy’s a serious person at his core, so he’d become a middle-aged man sprouting cat ears who has no time to rest because he’s busy taking care of everyone around him.”

That sounds like hell, not heaven. I guess the main part is that he wanted to relax, but only the cat part of his wish was granted. Though his example was horrid, I understood. It seemed that their regrets in this world would change their bodies.

I don’t think that was an example you give while grinning like that... It was an example, right? There’s no sad middle-aged catboy who wouldn’t make anyone happy, right? I considered checking with him, but if it was true, I would only be sadder, so I kept my question to myself.

“What happens to the changed residents there?”

Lemn tapped on the black side of the paper. “Once they’re satisfied, they go here.”

“Aren’t there some people who can’t resolve their regrets?”

“They will disappear on their own after some time. I think it usually takes a hundred years. I only know of one person who’s stayed for longer than that.”

There were surely plenty of regrets that wouldn’t go away, even if you could transform in the Kingdom of Twilight. The way Lemn described such regrets as disappearing on their own displayed his lack of interest in individual humans.

Though it was a vague explanation, we now understood what the Kingdom of Twilight was. Still, this was only a preamble to the main topic. There was this world that was neither heaven nor hell, and the fact that the left side of my body wasn’t working. At first glance, these two things seemed completely unrelated, but the fact that one had something to do with the other brought only one answer to mind.

When Lemn touched my left side, he’d clearly said that I was dead.

“So half of me is...”

“That’s right. Just your left half died and went to the Kingdom of Twilight.”

Chapter 3: The Hidden Boss (Left Side) Reunites with the Demon Lord

Okay, let me explain things from the beginning. My name is Yumiella Dolkness. Ever since I was reincarnated into the world of an otome game, I have been the one and only villainess! You know the rest from there, right?

I threw myself into level grinding. I defeated the Demon Lord along with a few other guys and even fell in love. I'm even getting married soon... No, let's not go into that. I became level 99, and then I uncapped my level. Level grinding really is the best!

Then I died... I don't know how. I met this young man who claims to be a hero, and I'm listening to an explanation about the afterlife—no, the Kingdom of Twilight...

The hero had used a mysterious piece of paper that was divided into a white side and a black side by a red line to explain where we were, and he'd just finished up.

"That's it. Any questions?"

"How did you make that paper?" I asked. After listening to the king's lecture on the Kingdom of Twilight, I was most interested in the mysterious sheet of paper. It was half white and half black, and tracing the border between the colors made a red line appear and disappear.

The king let out a nervous chuckle over how *that* was what I wanted to know about, and my question was answered by the cat-eared man holding the cat.

"A god made it and gave it to us, meow!"

"Huh, so you have gods here too?"

"That's right, meow! We only see him once in a while, but he's a nice god that tells us anything we want to know, meow!"

Wow. He made you guys this mysterious paper just to use as a visual aid and stuff, so he really seems like a good guy. He's nothing like a certain Lemn I know.

It was thanks to the black-and-white paper that I was able to grasp the concept of the existent-yet-nonexistent Kingdom of Twilight, though it was only a vague understanding.

I looked out at the still unusual sight of the red-toned world. Now that I knew its true identity, this lonely, barren terrain felt even sadder.

I now knew where I was and had learned that it wasn't really the afterlife, but that didn't change the fact that I was dead. I died while holding regrets and was clinging to life in the Kingdom of Twilight. *It doesn't really feel like I died... I don't even know how I died, so it doesn't really sit right with me.* As I silently ruminated over the fact that I'd died, the king spoke up.

"Everyone says that the Kingdom of Twilight experiences a perpetual sunset. Life has ended, and you must accept death—the sun setting. But *you* looked out at the horizon and declared it was the sunrise."

"I didn't really give it much thought," I clarified.

"There hasn't been anyone in several hundred years who has looked at that sight and thought it was dawn. I've known it ever since we first met—the sun will rise, and I'll be alive once more." As he declared his resurrection, the hero's eyes glimmered in a way that was the opposite of what one would expect from a dead man.

From his explanation earlier, I'd thought that this world was on a one-way path from life to death, but seeing how confident he was, it was starting to feel possible.

"Is there a way to be alive again?" I asked.

"I have some leads. I think that you'll also be a key to resurrection."

Me? I haven't used any magic since coming here, nor have I shown off my strength. Is there anything I can do aside from using brute force...?

"You've just arrived in the Kingdom of Twilight. In other words, you haven't been affected by this world yet."

He probably meant that my appearance hadn't been changed by the world, like the painter's had been. Because she wished to draw art that reflected reality, her body had changed to look like her art.

The middle-aged man's ears also grew because of his regrets from when he was alive. I could understand his wish to have lived like a cat, so I could almost accept his twitching bouncy cat ears... *Never mind. I can't.*

The regal-looking king, with his crown and cape, could actually have a different original appearance. Perhaps he was a civilian who just really wanted to become king. I wasn't going to ask him about it, since such a regret from one's life was probably incredibly personal, but I couldn't stop from imagining what his regrets were.

What about the calico kitty that the cat-eared man is holding? Does he not count because he's a cat?

Perhaps my body was going to change at some point as well. I couldn't imagine how it was going to change. I inspected my body, but neither my left arm nor my left leg showed any signs of transformations. *I'm sure all newly dead people look like this... What about me makes the king think I'm special?*

The king waffled a bit and seemed like he had difficulty getting something out, but he finally opened his mouth. "Your body has already changed..."

"Huh? What? Is something weird? Is it my face?" I touched my left cheek with my left hand, but it felt the same as usual.

Is he mistaken? Is something actually different? I glanced over at the cat-eared man, confused, and he awkwardly averted his gaze.

"Has something about me changed?" I asked. "I'd like to see a mirror."

"We *do* have a mirror, but..." The king pulled out a small hand mirror, but he seemed to be unsure of whether he should give it to me. He finally, though hesitantly, handed it to me, and I snatched it from him with my left hand before peering into it.

"Huh...? What is this?"



“You’ve been like that since we first met. It wasn’t gradual—you were just like that from the start. It’s not a change, but a disappearance... You’re full of unprecedented phenomena.”

Only half of my face showed up in the mirror. The right side of my face was gone, as if I’d been vertically split down the middle. The cross section was filled in with a dark black.

It wasn’t just my head. Half of my body was gone, split down the middle as well. My right arm and right leg were nowhere in sight.

Nothing had felt painful or abnormal since I’d woken up. I was able to walk normally, and it was a bit inconvenient that I couldn’t use my right hand, but it hadn’t bothered me.

I never thought that I’d be split down the middle from head to toe. Perhaps the reason for my death, which I had no recollection of, was related to this. Maybe my right side was destroyed? But Black Hole wouldn’t leave a clean cross section like this, so nothing comes to mind.

Curious about the cross section, I touched the flat, black surface with my left hand, as if to touch my cheek. It didn’t feel like my face was being touched, and there was a cool metallic sensation.

So I was sliced down the middle by a katana. My right half was incinerated, and my left half was coated in metal...and one of those things killed me. Nope, that definitely can’t be it.

Apparently, regardless of whether you were crushed or had lost a limb when you died, once you arrived in the Kingdom of Twilight, you would appear as your healthy self from when you were alive. That meant there had to be a special reason as to why I only had my left half.

Even if it was an effect of the Kingdom of Twilight, I couldn’t think of any wishes of mine that would’ve made my right side disappear. I didn’t have any insecurities about my right side, and I never wanted to cut my weight in half or anything...

“I wonder why my right half is gone,” I mused aloud.

“If you don’t know, I wouldn’t know either,” the king said, shaking his head before he continued. “I don’t know why, but if we try to figure out why that happened to you, it might give us a lead as to how we can become alive again.”

“You mentioned that before, but is there an actual way to get back to the mortal world?”

“I’ve been looking for it for a long time. I’ve found some things that could be hints as to how to do it. That’s why I’d like you to help me. You want to go back to living too, right? I’m sure you have unfinished business.” The glimmer of hope in the king’s eyes shone even brighter, and it felt like daybreak had arrived in this dim world.

I had plenty of unfinished business. I wanted to spend more time with Patrick, and I wanted to have more fun with Eleanora and Ryuu. I wanted to raise my level further, and as for my wedding...I kind of wanted to do it.

“I’ll help you. I want to be alive again as well!”

My mind was focused on all the things that I wanted to be alive for—that was why I hadn’t thought enough about what it would mean to come back to life.



Though it seemed like we were about to set off, Mr. Cat Ears put a damper on the atmosphere.

“Are you really going to go, meow?”

“We’ll be fine,” I said.

“It’s not good to be in the sunlight. The king doesn’t pay it any mind and walks around, but he’s special. You shouldn’t do it.” The fact that his speech quirk was gone meant that he was probably sincerely worried.

I definitely need to go, though. I silently shook my head, and the older man sighed and seemed to give up. He then set the calico down to the side and handed me a small glass bottle of something.

“At least take this with you.”

“Is that...perfume?” I probably knew it was perfume right away because of Eleanora. I couldn’t contain my curiosity, and I immediately did a single spray on

my wrist and smelled it. *What could my gift from the cat-eared man be...?* “Is it the smell of crime...?”

That was the kind of scent where you couldn’t tell what the offense was. Because it wasn’t a clear breaking of the law, an officer would probably have a hard time trying to come up with a charge for his cat ears. Anyway, there was no such fragrance, and I couldn’t really place the scent. It felt like flowers enveloped by a spicy aroma.

“It’s the smell of here. It’s based on the Kingdom of Twilight.”

“It’s ‘based on’...?” The way he’d phrased that made it sound like he’d made the perfume himself, so I’d repeated what he said as a question.

He nodded. “Yes, I made it. I’ve been making things like that since back when I was alive. I passed out from exhaustion after overworking, and I retired. After that, I dabbled in fragrances.”

So Mr. Cat Ears made perfumes as a hobby during retirement... I’ve heard of another person who got into perfumery after retiring, but is it a popular hobby for seniors, like hiking and making noodles from scratch?

I took another whiff of the fragrance, but I still couldn’t tell what it smelled like. *He said it’s based on the Kingdom of Twilight, but I don’t think this desert has a smell...* I looked at the hero as if to ask if my nose wasn’t working, but he just gave me a troubled laugh. This was apparently a part of the cat-eared man’s sensibilities.

“It’s a barren wasteland in a perpetual sunset, but the people live peacefully, doing as they please,” he continued, his speech quirk still gone. “I got the idea for the scent of a gentle afterlife.”

“Are you perhaps Quartus...?” I didn’t think it was actually possible, but a certain person’s name left my mouth.

The unfortunate perfumer, Quartus, had started making perfume after he’d retired. He was inspired by scenery and culture and created fragrances using his unique sensibilities... It matched up too closely, but there was no way that the man Eleanora respected looked so ridiculous.

“How do you know my name?”

“You’re really Quartus?! *The* Quartus?!”

“I’m not sure what you’re mistaken about, but I’m not too special of a person. Ever since I was young, I followed my father’s words and studied, and I worked as a bureaucrat just as he did. I died without ever getting married. I wanted to freely travel the world like my younger brother did, but I had no strength to do so once I retired. I’m just a man who died regretting not having given myself more freedom and not having rested more.”

Hearing how he lived a life that would make anyone want to become a cat, I was even more certain he was definitely Quartus. I was a bit familiar with the details of his life postretirement.

“You began making perfume after you retired when you passed out from exhaustion, right?”

“I’d always admired perfumers. But it was just the hobby of an old hermit, so no one took me seriously.”

“Your work gained notoriety after your death. Your perfumes are a huge hit!”

The reason he was known as the unfortunate perfumer was because he’d passed before he could see his work praised. The late bloomer Quartus didn’t get to be there when his work saw the light of day. Currently, it was so renowned that Eleanora, who was quite the fragrance lover, raved about his scents. I’d heard about them countless times.

“That’s impossible. The perfumes I made were...”

I had no interest in perfume whatsoever, but I couldn’t help but remember some things after hearing the same story hundreds—no, thousands of times. I knew what he was going to say.

“...fake fragrances,” we both said in unison. The man was shocked by how I’d matched him perfectly, so I continued in his stead.

“The reason your fragrances were called fake was because they were based on places and things that you didn’t know. You made scents based on unfamiliar scenery, culture, and flowers that your brother wrote about in his travelogues as he wandered the world.”

There were scents based on a deep, dark forest crowded with giant trees, a kingdom filled with cheery music lovers, a rare flower that only grew in certain regions. The scents based on things no one knew weren't immediately accepted, but they'd only gained popularity after the perfumer had passed by fueling people's imaginations with a peek into an unknown world.

Though he hadn't believed me, now that I'd said the motivations behind his work, he was flustered. "B-But...I was someone who'd only left my town a handful of times. The scents I imagined based on mere text were definitely off the mark..."

"That's right. They smelled nothing like the real thing. That one rare flower is locally notorious for smelling terrible."

If someone could only know of the scent of a rare flower through a perfume, it was human of them to be curious as to what the real thing smelled like. One noble lady from a very important aristocratic family spent a hefty chunk of money to import the flower from another continent. The flower that arrived had the features she'd heard of, but it gave off a horrid smell that was hard to endure. His brother's travelogues had only described the appearance of the flower, so there was no way Quartus could've known, but the lady herself was apparently shocked to her core.

"It smelled terrible? My brother never said anything of the sort..."

After the rancid flower was delivered to her, the noble lady hadn't lost hope, but she did think it was strange. She went as far as to get her hands on the travelogues and researched everything she could about the younger brother—or rather, she had other people research it for her. This noble lady had no investigation skills. She then reached a certain conclusion: there was another reason his fragrances were "fake."

"Your brother didn't know either," I said. "He only knew what the flower looked like."

"Why? My brother's nose worked fine. He didn't describe the smell, but he wrote in detail about the smell of the ocean as he sailed across it."

"He only knew the smell of the ocean. He never traveled the world. After he left home, he spent his days working in a port town."

In his older brother's twilight years, Quartus's brother appeared before him and left him his travelogues, which were filled with nothing but lies. He had just made it seem like he himself had experienced the stories he'd heard from others. Of course, his travelogues were manufactured tales.

Why had he lied? No one knew his true intentions, but his older brother seemed to understand.

"That kid... My younger brother had always been a show-off since a young age. He'd say he'd gotten in a fight and won or that he'd found a gemstone on the street—he'd always tell such tall tales. He was probably scamming people in that port town, wasn't he?"

"No, not at all. He seemed to be working at a trading company, managing their books. I've heard that there were tons of cargo from ships every day, so it was really hard work."

These brothers had led similar lives. They both battled with paperwork, and the younger made fake travelogues while the older made fake fragrances.

Eleanora said that the fake scents made based on fake stories were much more memorable than the real thing. Even though I didn't care about this topic, she'd mentioned that enough that it was burned into my memory.

"I wished to have lived like my brother, relaxing like a cat, but it seems I was mistaken," the man said. "The truth is...I wanted to travel the world with him."

That was a difficult regret to resolve. Becoming a cat was probably easier.

I wanted to tell him of his success, so I couldn't help myself, but perhaps I shouldn't have said anything. I wasn't sure what to say to him, and I stood there silent. Suddenly, a voice came from below.

"I was mistaken too. I thought I wanted to live like the cats who mooched off fishermen for fish, but that was misguided."

Huh? Who's talking? I scanned the area, looking for the owner of the voice I couldn't see, but all I saw was a calico. *You don't talk, do you, kitty?* As I stared at the cat, his ears fell off. In the blink of an eye, the cat grew larger and changed into a human. He became a middle-aged man who looked similar to Quartus.

“I wanted to travel the world with you too,” he said.

Wait. So the cat-eared man is the older brother, and the former cat is the younger brother? The man and the cat really were related?

I seemed to be the only one who was surprised that the cat turned into a human. I would've expected him to be shocked that the cat he'd known was his younger brother, but the siblings shared no words of reunion and walked off together.

“We can explore the Kingdom of Twilight. It's rarer than any hidden land.”

“That's true. I can write the travelogues, and you can look at those to make your perfumes.”

“I don't need your manufactured travelogues since I'll be seeing the real thing.”

“This time my logs will be just as real as your scents.”

The similar-looking siblings then stepped out into the dim expanse. Though the older brother had been so afraid of the sunlight, he stood in it with his brother as they both turned into sand and disappeared.

“They're gone... Why?” I asked.

“Their regrets from when they were alive are gone. It's just like the painter who disappeared earlier. They're satisfied...even though morning hasn't come yet.”

This was perhaps an everyday occurrence in the Kingdom of Twilight, but they hadn't been the same as the painter. I wasn't happy with the way the hero had described them as being “satisfied.”

“But they haven't traveled the world together yet!”

“Their wish was probably to take a step into an unknown world together...”

I see. I guess if their regrets were resolved at the same time, I should probably be happy about that. I was a bit sad to be parting with the impressive people I'd just met, and I voiced the strongest feeling in my heart.

“The calico...was a middle-aged man.”

“I’ve been saying it this whole time. The calico was the younger brother.”

I mean, I’d never think that a man with cat ears and a sweet, adorable calico were blood-related siblings. I regretted not petting the calico before he turned back into a human.

“Let’s hurry,” the hero said. “It’s before daybreak. Let’s take back our morning.”

“Okay...”

The painter and the cat siblings both thought of this world as experiencing a perpetual sunset. Even after seeing the reality of the Kingdom of Twilight, I didn’t want to give up on being alive again. We had been on our way out of the settlement to look for some clues.

I took a step onto the earth lit by the light of dawn.



The hero and I were walking the red wasteland, headed towards the light source spilling over the horizon. We were basically going back on the path we took from where I woke up to the settlement.

Bad things would happen if you were in the sunlight...was what the cat-eared man had heard from a god. The reason was much too vague, and the hero didn’t seem to care about it.

“Is it true that it’s bad to be in the sunlight?”

“Out of all the residents of this kingdom, I’ve been here the longest. I’ve been walking around outside of the settlement and ignoring the god’s warning, but I don’t sense any abnormalities occurring.”

“But it’s a warning directly from the god’s mouth, not some myth with an unknown source, right?”

“I can’t trust that god. He looks like a child.”

Huh, so the god here is similar to Lemn. The cat-eared man seemed like a good person, so I could see him believing the words of a twisted god. Since I knew a suspicious god who looked like a young boy, it was easy to accept that their god was the same.

“I know a similar phony god,” I said.

“That god controls the inside of shadows. I think he probably tells people that the sunlight is dangerous and they should stay in the shade because he wants to keep the residents somewhere he can keep his eye on them.”

“Maybe the god I know isn’t just similar but the same one...” *That dark one is here too? He sure does show up anywhere and everywhere.*

If Lemn was here, I wanted to ask him to bring me back to life, but it only took a moment to realize that was impossible. He was a god that valued the laws of the world, so he would never approve of something like resurrection.

The hero thought it was impossible for me to be familiar with Lemn. “It’s probably someone else,” he said as a preface. “The place we’re going to now is also somewhere the god said was dangerous. That’s why I think there’s a clue to how we can be alive again there.”

“I see. So it’s not dangerous, but inconvenient for the god.”

“Exactly. I believe that opening the door is the only path to revival.”

“The door?” I asked.

“I call the place we’re headed to ‘the door.’ It should be coming into view soon.”

We’d come far more east (I think) than the spot I’d woken up in. Once we hiked over a slightly tall hill, the hero pointed in a certain direction.

There was a door—a giant door. A frame with double doors stood in the middle of the empty red wasteland. There was no building it led to. There was just a gray door sitting in the middle of the desert.

It looked like one could easily walk around it, and it didn’t seem to be doing its job as a door. *I wonder what the other side looks like.* I didn’t have to voice my question, because the hero began to explain.

“There’s nothing on the other side. It doesn’t separate anything. It’s a pointless door, but...”

“It seems like something mysterious could happen there.”

“Indeed, but nothing happened. I’ve pushed on the door before, but it doesn’t budge. I think it can only be opened through some special method, not force. That’s why I’ve brought you here.”

Don’t worry, even if you need to brute force it, there’s no better person for the job than me.

Unable to contain myself, I nearly ran towards the door, which seemed like it could be connected to the world of the living. But before I could, the hero stopped me.

“Calm down. The door has a guard.”

“That’s even more suspicious. How have you been inspecting the door?”

“I haven’t gone near it since the guard came, so it’s been about a year.”

According to the hero, the guard had only been placed there recently. It had been completely open and free for all to inspect until then, so maybe the fact that a guard appeared meant it really was connected to the mortal world.

“So the god got worried and placed a guard there, right?”

“Nope, he has nothing to do with the god. The guard protects the door because he wants to—no one’s instructed him to do so.”

Huh? Why? Is it his hobby? Is he volunteering? Is this gatekeeper even a person? If he is, then he’s someone who died recently, and should have no reason to guard the door. Also, there’s probably a reason the hero is so sure that he has nothing to do with the god...

The hero seemed to know a lot about the gatekeeper, but he only shared minimal information. “I have some personal stuff with him.”

“I guess it’s tough being the king of the Kingdom of Twilight,” I said.

“No, we had a relationship when we were alive.”

Oh, I see. I guess it’s possible to meet someone you knew when you were alive here. Wait. It was only recently that the guard started guarding the door voluntarily, and the hero died a long time ago... The timelines don’t match up. Does that mean the guard’s been here for a while, and he only just started guarding the door recently?

“I’ll distract the guard, so I want you to head to the door,” the hero said.

“Will that work? What if the guard prioritizes protecting the door?”

“That won’t happen, though if you’ve done something to make him resent you, things might be different...”

So the guard hates the hero. I decided not to press further. It seemed like there was something about the guard that the hero didn’t want to share. *I probably don’t know him anyway. I’ll focus on the door.*

The hero was to go first and distract the guard, while I took a detour to head to the door. We were able to come up with our rough formation right away.

On his own, the hero headed towards the silhouette that looked small when compared to the giant door behind it. Though I could make out his outline, he was backlit, so I couldn’t see any of the guard’s other features. *I need to focus on the door, not the gatekeeper.*

While hiding behind the dunes, I took a massive detour and headed to the door. It seemed like the hero and gatekeeper were arguing about something. I made my way closer to the door while the guard was distracted...

“No way...” I said, the words accidentally slipping out of my mouth.

There was no way I couldn’t react after seeing the man facing the hero—after seeing his long black hair and the face I dared not forget, which belonged to the man worthy of standing opposite the hero.



He's supposed to be dead... Oh right. He's dead.

He'd heard my voice, and the man—no, the Demon Lord—turned around.

"You... After all that boasting, you still died young, huh?" He should have wanted revenge on me, but the Demon Lord looked at me with compassion.

I see. If people come to this kingdom after they die, it makes sense for him to be here. I'd thought that the gatekeeper was a stranger, but the exact opposite was true. I can't believe I'm being reunited with the person I killed...

Our plan to raid the door had collapsed. I just stood there, unable to say anything else, and the hero opened his mouth next.

"I didn't think you two knew each other. I assume you met after the seal broke?"

The hero... *That's right, he said he was called "Hero."* The hero dressed like a king, knew about the Kingdom of Valschein and was hated by the gatekeeper... That was all I'd known about him, which made his identity a mystery, but now that I knew the gatekeeper was the Demon Lord, his identity was easy to narrow down.

The hero who'd been in the Kingdom of Twilight for several hundreds of years had to be none other than the first king of Valschein.

The hero and Demon Lord from the foundational era of the kingdom—and me. After sealing away the Demon Lord, the hero died of old age. After escaping his seal, the Demon Lord was killed by me. And I died for some unknown reason.

The three of us, who had all died at different times but were all connected, were gathered together in the Kingdom of Twilight.

"I never thought I'd see the hero and Demon Lord together," I mumbled.

The Demon Lord reacted, pointing at the hero with his chin as he said in a displeased tone, "Hero? You're saying *that* guy is a hero?"

That's right. The story of the hero and the Demon Lord was manufactured after the fact.

The true story was that the first king had feared the power of the Demon Lord and betrayed him, sealing him away. Then it was spread that a hero had defeated the evil Demon Lord.

In the past, the Demon Lord had tried to destroy the kingdom, but it wasn't possible for him to do so now. In that case, I wanted to be on his side.

The Kingdom of Twilight was where those with regrets gathered. Maybe my regret was that I couldn't save the Demon Lord. I stood beside the Demon Lord and faced the hero.

"I don't know your current situation, but I'm on your side," I said to the Demon Lord.

The legendary hero was against the allyship of the final boss and the hidden boss. It was unclear who would be victorious in this battle.

Chapter 4: The Hidden Boss (Right Side) Finds a Black Notebook

Okay. Let me just explain this one more time. My name is Yumiella Right-Side Dolkness. I'm the one and only villainess of this world! Or rather, I was... I've apparently been split into two halves.

In the absolute worst turn of events, my left side died and is in a place called the Kingdom of Twilight, so I can only move the right side of my body. I won't give up, though! I've faced plenty of difficult situations until now.

I'm definitely going to get my left side back, but in order to do that, I first need to...

"What should we do?"

"What should we do, indeed?" Patrick repeated.

I'd forced myself to feel motivated to solve this problem, but Patrick and I were just sighing deeply at this nonsensical situation where half my body had died.

After we found out that my left side was dead, we had tried asking Lemn various questions, but he didn't have any useful information. It seemed that the Kingdom of Twilight, or whatever it was called, couldn't be visited unless you died, and there was no way to come back to the living world from Twilight.

If Yumiella (right side) were to die in order to go to the Kingdom of Twilight and save Yumiella (left side), that would go against the whole point of trying to return to being a whole Yumiella. *Well, you were a good person, Yumiella (left side). I'll live a life full enough for the both of us!*

"What should we do?"

"What should we do, indeed?" Patrick repeated once again.

We both let out our umpteenth sigh. *I think we're toast. Not only are we in an incomprehensible situation based on retconned lore, but our only clues lie with*

Lemn.

Lemn was rejoicing over the fact that my strength had been halved, so I couldn't expect him to help us too much. The silver lining was that he would at least answer our questions.

I turned to the god of darkness to ask another question. "Is there truly no way to come back to life?"

"I don't know."

"Can't we speak to them or communicate through letters or something?"

"I've heard of scents passing through from Twilight to here, but voices and text won't work."

Why can smells come through? Maybe I can use scents to use Morse code and communicate with my left half... No, that wouldn't work. The me over there is me after all—she wouldn't be able to understand a code that uses smells.

As I pondered a way to communicate only through smells, Patrick spoke up. "Even if Yumiella herself can't, couldn't *you* send a message to the Yumiella over there, Lemn? You can go to the Kingdom of Twilight, right?"

"Fine, I'll send a message to miss's left side. A letter would be fine too. I'll deliver it to her!"

"We need to explain our situation, then..." Patrick trailed off. "Hold on. You seem too happy to do it. You're saying you'll go to the Kingdom of Twilight, but you're probably just going to hide and stay hidden, aren't you?"

Lemn fell silent. It seemed that was exactly his plan.

There was no way to directly communicate with my left half, and our messenger couldn't be trusted. There was really nothing we could do.

It would be nice if she (left side) could contact us... Actually, Patrick said something about explaining our situation. I wonder how much she knows about what's going on.

If I were to end up with only the left half of my body, I would think that my right half had disappeared. I would never imagine that my right half was alive and just my left half had died. Did my left side even know she was dead?

Lemn was here to explain the Kingdom of Twilight to us, but there probably wasn't such a convenient character to explain things over there. Since my left half's understanding might affect how we move forward, I decided to ask Lemn if he knew anything.

"Do you think my left half understands what's going on? I think she might not know she's dead."

"I can't say for sure since I wasn't there, but I don't think that's the case. I think King probably told her about it."

"So she knows that she's dead... I didn't realize the Kingdom of Twilight had a king."

"He's just acting like a leader on his own," Lemn clarified.

I was surprised to learn that not only was there a leader, but there was a whole community in the Kingdom of Twilight. *I was expecting some kind of lawless land where people do as they please.* I expressed my honest impression to Lemn, who then confessed to his own atrocities.

"Well, I said the sunlight isn't good for them, and everyone just believed me. They all stay in the shade of a mountain, which makes it easy for me to observe them. It's been really helpful. I think your left side is at that settlement too."

"Don't you feel bad for the people who are earnestly following your words?" I asked.

"Erm, not really. King doesn't believe me anyway."

Wow...I should know this by now, but Lemn sure is thoughtless to the point it's off-putting. Though I was disconcerted by the god of malice, Lemn, Patrick seemed to be concerned with something else.

"Why do you call this leader 'King'? He doesn't seem to have any kingly aspects to him from the way you've described him."

Now that Patrick's mentioned it, that's true. He feels more like the leader of a neighborhood association or something. Does this leader call himself King? Or have people started to just call him that? There's also the possibility that Lemn calls him King ironically...

The answer was none of the above. Lemn casually revealed the truth, which was a shocking fact we couldn't ignore.

"Oh, remind me, what's the name of this kingdom?"

"The Kingdom of Valschein?"

"Yeah, that's the one. He's the first king of this kingdom, so he's King."

Some facts were more significant to certain people, while not being a big deal to others. This should've been obvious, but Lemn's sensibilities were that of an insane person when it came to these sorts of things. The fact that the first king of Valschein was in the Kingdom of Twilight might've not been the first thing, but surely should've been around the third thing to mention.

"Why didn't you tell us?!" I asked.

"I mean, he's just a guy."

"He's the *king*. He's a special person. You should've told us."

"Everyone is special to someone," Lemn said. "Depending on who you ask, they might be more interested in the cat-eared man than the king."

Le mn wasn't wrong. This cat-eared man's family would probably be more interested in hearing about him rather than the founding father of Valschein. *Wait...is there actually a cat-eared man?*

Wow, the first king, huh? Since I knew the truth behind the Demon Lord, I had a terrible impression of the king.

"Please tell me more about the first king," I said. "I'd also like to know if there are any other important people there."

"Important people...like the cat-eared man?"

"I've heard enough about him."

After asking various questions to Lemn about the first king, the man's peculiar nature came to light. Even setting aside his status of being a king while he was alive, he was quite the special person.

This King was acting as a leader of the Kingdom of Twilight because he was its longest resident. Most people in that world would disappear in several decades

even if they'd died with regrets, but the king had been there for several centuries. Not only that, but the king ignored Lemn's warnings and explored the sunlit world. His goal was to come back to life.

This King was the closest to the solution of how my left side might come back to life. Since they could cooperate under similar interests, the king was perhaps more helpful in this situation than Lemn was. I continued asking questions about the king, wanting to know more.

"What's his motivation for coming back to life?"

"All humans try to return to the living world after they die."

"That may be true, but the fact that he works harder than most normal people must mean that he has some great ambition he wants to fulfill in this world."

"I don't know, nor do I care."

Ah, there's that awful side of Lemn that doesn't care about people's feelings. Well, since the King is in the Kingdom of Twilight, he definitely has some sort of regret... I guess it's no surprise for a king to have a regret or two, but the fact that he's worked for centuries to find a way to resurrect himself without giving up must mean it's a hefty ambition.

"What do you think, Patrick?" I asked. "What do you think the first king's objective is?"

"I'm not sure. I can't even begin to imagine what it could be since I don't know what kind of person he is."

Yeah, same. I still can't figure out what kind of person he is. Though historical texts wrote about his personality, there was probably some added color that differed from reality.

What kinds of thoughts cross the mind of someone as important as the founder of a kingdom on his deathbed...?



After that, we continued to interrogate Lemn in order to figure out what sort of person the first king was, but we found out pretty much nothing. *Could you*

be a little more interested in individuals, Lemn?

We were at an impasse, but the first king of Valschein was still our only way out of this. Since there was nothing else we could do, we headed to the Royal Capital to research him as much as we could.

With Patrick supporting my immobile left side, we traveled for half a day by carriage and headed to the Royal Capital. Ryu stayed home, but Eleanora tagged along for some reason.

Upon arriving at the Royal Capital, we immediately headed to the Royal Palace, where we were able to meet with Ronald right away. We were brought to a room that had been cleared of others, and right away Eleanora was struggling with how to address Ronald.

“Broth— No, my mistake. Headmas— No, that’s wrong too... Who are you?”

“You don’t have to keep it a secret,” Ronald said.

“My dear brother!”

“Yes, yes. It’s been a while, Eleanora.”

Ronald was Eleanora’s older brother, as well as the former headmaster of the Royal Academy and the current king’s right hand... He was a complex man. He also knew of the truth behind the Demon Lord’s sealing, so he would be very helpful in researching the unembellished facts regarding the first king.

After some quick greetings, I immediately jumped into the main topic. “I’m currently researching the first king. Could I take a look at the documents in the royal family’s archives?”

“Sure. I’ll take you there, so have a look at whatever you’d like.”

Wow. That only took one round of conversation to be settled.

I preferred stories with quick developments, but this felt a bit excessive. Surely the precious documents regarding the royal family’s ancestors were filled with things that couldn’t be shown to the public. I fell silent, expecting there to be some sort of catch, and Ronald spoke up right away.

“You can trust me. This is related to your left leg, and by the looks of it, your arm as well, right? I wouldn’t allow it if it was just out of curiosity, but if you’re in some sort of trouble, I’d like to help.”

“Thank you very much. I’ll be sure to return the favor by—”

“No, no. It’s fine. I can’t accept a favor from someone who isn’t feeling well and seems to be struggling.”

I’d wanted to specify how I was going to return the favor, but he was a tenacious man. *I guess this means I owe him one.* I was going to have to provide an adequate favor in the future, whenever Ronald or His Majesty needed it. *Ugh, I would’ve preferred he just charged me an exorbitant amount to look at the documents.*

Despite my dissatisfaction, I had no choice but to agree.

“Understood. I’ll return the favor one day.”

“I might reach out to you if we’re ever in a little trouble, but you can help us out when it’s convenient for you.”

I guess it’s a small price to pay to look at texts that have never left the premises. Ronald won’t ask for anything ridiculous either. He already knows I would say no if he asked me to help the kingdom take over the world. He’ll definitely ask for a favor that toes the line of something I won’t want but will agree to do.

It wasn’t a terrible deal. In fact, I was much more unreasonable in this situation for suddenly asking to see the royal family’s secrets without any explanation of my situation. Even if I did tell him the whole story about how my left side had died and so on, he probably wouldn’t believe me. I’d pretty much given up on explaining the situation, but that wasn’t the case for Eleanora.

“Yumiella’s left side has gone to the Kingdom of Twilight! She heard from the god of darkness that a king from long ago is trying to come back to life. That’s why we came here!”

Ronald just smiled and nodded along to his sister’s words. Though her explanation was filled with fantastical elements, he didn’t react in any unusual way. “Eleanora spills everything,” he said in a gentle tone. “The best thing to do

is convince her that lies are the truth.”

“I’m not lying!” Eleanora objected.

Ronald trusted that his sister wasn’t a liar, but at the same time, he knew that she would take lies seriously. It was actually more convenient for us if he thought Eleanora was lying, so I ignored Eleanora’s fuming.

“I sure am glad, though. I was worried whatever you came for was related to that recent incident.”

“I’m sorry for the confusion.”

The recent incident Ronald was referring to was probably all the commotion regarding the Lord of National Affairs. It was just a week ago that I had caused trouble at the court conference, so I was a little embarrassed to come to the Royal Palace.

The documents were in the palace basement. With Patrick supporting me, I dragged my paralyzed left side as I walked. If I hopped on my right leg, I could move on my own, but I restrained myself since I was in the Royal Palace.

I have a good sense of judgment, so I abstain from bizarre actions when in a serious place. Forget about that Lord of Leveling stuff.

We arrived at the archives in the palace basement. It was bright thanks to a magical instrument lighting the area, but the air around us had that chilliness unique to basements.

“To *that* room, please,” Ronald said, which prompted the keeper to head to a door down the hall and take out one of the keys dangling from his neck. He then used that key to open the door before returning to his post.

Oh, so this is as far as he goes. I was going to ask him where the documents I’m looking for are. I watched the keeper walk away.

“He has the keys, but he can’t go inside,” Ronald explained. “The records surrounding the foundation of this kingdom are just that confidential.”

“What? Is it okay for me to look at them? I won’t be ‘disappeared’?”

“You already know things that would get a regular person ‘disappeared.’”

We knew about the truth behind the Demon Lord and that the former Duke of Hillrose was still alive. We knew enough that it wouldn't be strange for the kingdom to suddenly decide that we knew too much and get rid of us.

If they had a way to get rid of me, they probably would've done it already, I thought as I entered the secret room.

“It's small,” I said.

The room really was small. It was a space of about eleven square meters, and three walls were covered in bookshelves, which made the space more like eight square meters. *This is it? This is all the confidential information?*

The shelves were filled with books that had clean spines. Each book was ‘clean’ in every sense—there were no stains, no patterns, not even text... Seeing a shelf full of books with blank spines felt very unsettling, and I stood there, mesmerized.

“Do you know why they're like this?” Ronald asked.

“Is it so that it's hard to find specific documents and intruders can't find what they're looking for? They'd have no choice but to search each and every book.”

“That's what you'd think, right? An intruder would be so focused on the shelves, in a hurry to check the books...to the point that they wouldn't realize there's a trap door beneath their feet.”

Beneath their feet? I looked down at the floor in the area I was standing, and... *Wait. There's a hole in the stone flooring.*

Ronald pulled out a key and stuck it in the hole, then turned it, but nothing happened. *Huh? Isn't there supposed to be a hidden room under this one?* Suddenly, Patrick started stomping on the ground.

“It makes a dull sound,” Patrick said. “There's a room under here?”

“Yeah, it makes you wonder. If an intruder were to find this keyhole, they might think the secrets are hidden underneath and try to dig a hole in the floor.” Ronald laughed, seeing that we were thinking like this imaginary intruder.

The room first draws your attention to the bookshelves, then to the floor.
Where's the stuff really hidden? I looked up, expecting the next misdirection to be on the ceiling, which made Ronald chuckle teasingly.

"The key in the floor is connected to here," he said, pulling on one of the bookshelves in the back with both hands, but...it didn't move.

I thought the bookshelf was actually going to be a secret door, but it wasn't such a simple gimmick after all.

Ronald struggled with the bookshelf as he explained the full truth behind the hidden room. "Behind this—urgh!—this door...mmph! Sorry, can someone help me...?"

It turned out that he just wasn't strong enough.

The left half of my body wasn't working, and Patrick was busy supporting me, so neither of us could rush to help him. Eleanora was the first to volunteer her help. It was as helpful as if the mouse was the next one to help the grandpa in "The Gigantic Turnip."

"Leave it to me!" Eleanora declared.

"I'll say 'go,' then we'll—"

"Okay! Ragh!"

"Wait, wait. That 'go' was just me explaining the signal."

"Ragh!"

"I give up. Hnngh!"

The meager siblings attempted to move the bookshelf with a lack of teamwork that seemed unusual from siblings. The heavy bookshelf made a deep sound as it began moving. Once it started moving, the rest was easy, and the Hillrose siblings were able to fully open the secret door attached to the bookshelf.



It was time to enter the room with the kingdom's secrets. The first thing that caught my eye in the dim room was a mummified mermaid.

It was a *mummified mermaid*. Its upper half looked like a monkey, and its bottom half looked like a fish—it was definitely a mermaid.

There were plenty of other things, like rusty swords, old wooden slips, and yellowed stacks of papers, but the mermaid mummy was so impactful that nothing else was registering.

The large glass case containing the desiccated mermaid was sitting in a corner of the room, covered in dust, yet it had such a strong presence.

What a shock! The government has been hiding the existence of cryptids after all! Though in a fantasy world with monsters, cryptids don't feel that special... They don't feel that strange, I guess.

After realizing that the mermaid mummy wasn't such a big deal, I immediately lost interest in it, but for some reason Patrick was now overreacting to it.

"What *is* that thing...?"

"It's probably some monster from the sea."

"It's not a monster," he objected. "Monsters don't leave carcasses behind."

He was right. Once a monster died, its body disappeared. Since they were quasi organisms completely made out of magical energy, the moment they stopped being active they would turn back into magical energy and disappear as if they'd evaporated, leaving only magic stones behind. For that reason, it was impossible to taxidermy a monster or make weapons out of their claws.

Does that mean that mermaid's not a monster but an animal? Is it something that can be explained by biology like regular mammals and fish, even though it looks like that?

What a shock! The government has been hiding the existence of cryptids after all! This is the second time it's been proved today. They're probably hiding the existence of UFO's along with cryptids. Are we really going to be all right? Is the kingdom going to "disappear" us?

I glanced over at Ronald, worried about whether we'd be able to safely return home after seeing such unbelievable things.

"I apologize," he began, sounding regretful. "I don't mean to rain on your fun, but that's fake. An amateur just put together the bones of a monkey and a fish."

Then why is it being stored in the basement like it's some precious thing?! I won't be fooled! I'll bring your conspiracies to light!

As I fumed all on my own, Patrick made his way to the display case housing the mermaid mummy, not seeming skittish.

"The bones on the monkey side and fish side are pretty different."

"What? Really?"

"Look here."

He's right. The more I looked at the suspicious mermaid's hips, the more obvious it became that this was a poorly made fake. *Ugh, what a boring world. But I still believe there are aliens.* Before I could ask why they were storing such an item, Ronald answered.

"It seems that an important person made it long ago. We can't make it public, and no one has the heart to throw it out either."

Who the heck is this important person who had enough free time to make this thing? I'm sure they would be okay with throwing it out. They probably made it when they were a kid anyway. It's like your parents keeping your crafts from elementary school in a storage closet, only it's been several hundred years.

Though the mummified mermaid had stood out quite a bit, its importance drastically decreased. I needed to focus on my original objective, so I began scanning the secret room.

The room, which could be called the forbidden archives, turned out to be quite large once we entered. It was filled with things like wooden slips that felt ancient, carefully bound stacks of papers, and a metal box that was wrapped with chains... There were items that were historically valuable and things that couldn't be revealed to the public. I once again felt that I'd come to a dangerous

place.

“Is it really okay to show me this place?” I asked Ronald.

“It’s fine. You probably won’t tell anyone.”

It was true that I wouldn’t reveal secrets I’d found out here to others, nor would I let them accidentally slip. The same went for Patrick. *Everyone here can keep their mouth shut—*

“Wowie! There are so many old things!”

I wonder if this is fine. She’s the last person who should be here. I started to get worried, and I glanced over at the potential risk’s brother to see if things were okay.

“I wonder if this is fine,” Ronald said. “She’s the last person who should be here.”

It seemed that her dear brother felt the same way.

That very same potential risk continued to explore the room on her own, her unfortunate danger on full display. *Stop! You’re going to end up seeing something you shouldn’t, and they’ll erase your memories. They’ll show you a glowing pen thing!*

Nothing here should’ve been interesting to Eleanora, but she began rummaging around with a strange persistence.

“There’s a wonderful scent coming from somewhere,” Eleanora remarked. “This smells like...a desert at sunset,” she mumbled to no one as she sniffed the air.

Now that she’s mentioned it, something smells like flowers enveloped in something. There’s nothing about it that smells like a desert at sunset, though. Actually, what does that even smell like?

Ronald tilted his head in confusion without trying to sniff out the scent, but Patrick seemed to understand.

“You two get what she’s talking about?” Ronald asked. “Is there such a smell?”

“It does smell faintly of flowers, but not desertlike... Do you know what it is, Patrick?”

“I can smell that something smells like perfume, but I don’t know where it’s coming from.”

Thanks to our heightened senses that came with being at high levels, Patrick and I were both able to smell the scent that Eleanora was talking about. It was incredible that Eleanora was able to notice it without the same advantages as us.

Eleanora went deeper into the room in search of where the smell was originating from.

“Oh, this is... But this shouldn’t smell so...”

Eleanora arrived at the farthest part of the room. I was worried if it was okay for her to rummage in this area.

“This is actually the area where all the documents relating to the foundation of the kingdom—in other words the first king—are located,” Ronald said.

The perfume-detection dog Eleanora had brilliantly found the documents we were looking for. Though it was probably a coincidence, it was a magnificent move on her part. Eleanora finally found the source of the fragrance.

“It’s this notebook! The smell is coming from this.” Eleanora held a black notebook up high. It was probably an antique item from before the foundation of the kingdom, but it didn’t look too weathered.

“Whose is that?” I asked.

Ronald just placed his hand over his mouth with a dubious look. “There shouldn’t be something here that’s not in the catalog... Did an intruder leave it behind? No, that’s not possible. In that case, what is that...?”

What? Is it some unknown item? It didn’t seem likely that something within Eleanora’s reach had been undiscovered until just now. *That’s strange...*

Reading the contents of the notebook would probably reveal some information, but Eleanora was only interested in its smell. She brought the notebook up to her nose. As she took a long sniff, a look of happiness washed

over her face.

“Ah... This is such a lovely scent.”

I knew she liked nice fragrances, but it was rare for her to be so enamored by a smell. *Maybe there's something dangerous in that scent. It smells like crime.*

“I wonder what this smell is,” I said.

“There's something mysterious about it, like when you think something's ended but it's only just begun. There's also a loneliness to it, like a desert at sunset. There's also a joy to it, like being able to live as you please...”

“I see...”

“More than anything, this smells like the real thing.”

“Is that so?” I limply responded.

“Finally... He was finally able to make something real.” Overcome with emotion, tears began streaming down Eleanora's face.

I would've liked some information that would help us narrow things down, like the scent of a flower from a certain place or a fragrance that can only be obtained at a certain location... My senses weren't as sensitive as Eleanora's, so I wouldn't be able to understand. I decided to give up on figuring out what the smell was.

After getting the notebook from a teary Eleanora, I immediately scanned the contents. There was an entry written in rounded, cutesy handwriting.

“Ugh, he's so annoying! Also, I saw that girl for the first time in a while, and she was split in half! I was so surprised!!!”

What the hell is this? It's as unintelligible as Eleanora's thoughts on the scent. I showed the notebook to Ronald, thinking if he could deduce the contents then we'd be able to figure out what this was, but it only furthered our confusion.

“I think I would remember something like this...” he said.

One mystery just leads to another... Perhaps this entry hadn't made sense because I'd flipped to a random page. I flipped through the notebook and

checked the first page.

“Starting today, I’m going to jot down my thoughts and feelings from my daily life. I hope the rest of my day is wonderful!”

It seemed like a diary, or rather, a collection of memos. The adorable, round handwriting meant that the owner was probably a woman. I skimmed the notebook as I flipped through the pages.

“Work was so tough today. I’m so exhausted! I want comfort.”

“My boss, who I admire, and my crush were hanging out together. Feeling kinda sad.”

“My crush told me, ‘You’re weirdly feminine when it comes to certain things’! Is that a good thing...?”

“Got demoted. I’m definitely not going to forgive my boss, grrr!”

“I might’ve unlocked some secret power... I’m totally going to use it to get back at my boss!”

“I’m suddenly in an unfamiliar place? Where am I? I’m so lonely.”

“Ugh, he’s so annoying! Also, I saw that girl for the first time in a while, and she was split in half! I was so surprised!!!”

Oops, I made it to the newest entry. After a quick skim, it seemed that it was eighty percent about the owner’s romantic relationships, and the rest was all complaints about her boss. Most of it was stuff that didn’t matter, and it felt like the owner’s imagination was running wild with the part about the secret power... *Really, what is this?*

Chapter 5: The Hidden Boss (Left Side) Learns the Truth about the Demon Lord

The Demon Lord, the hero, and me. The hero had sealed away the Demon Lord, then I had killed the Demon Lord. With the constantly victimized Demon Lord at the center, this group, whose fates were intertwined, had met up in the Kingdom of Twilight.

“I don’t know your current situation, but I’m on your side.” As someone who knew the truth behind the legend of the hero, I wanted to side with the Demon Lord.

The reason we hadn’t been able to work things out while we were alive was because the Demon Lord had tried to destroy the Kingdom of Valschein. But that was an ambition that he couldn’t fulfill now, so there was nothing to be worried about.

Actually...is this okay? What if he’s trying to come back to life like the hero is?

“What is your current goal?” I asked the Demon Lord, giving him a side-eye as I stood next to him.

“To stop his ridiculous plan of coming back to life.”

“Do you want to come back to life yourself?”

“I have no desire to return to a world with nothing but suffering.”

Wow, religions that get popular when there’s a ton of public unrest think the same way. Can I really trust him? It’s not like this place is heaven or the Land of Bliss.

I wasn’t sure about what was in his heart, but for now I was relieved that the Demon Lord had no intentions of coming back to life. I could side with him without any hesitation.

The man clad in black armor gave me a suspicious look. “Are you going to

stand with me?”

“I *was* planning to resurrect myself with the hero, but I can’t trust someone like him.”

His regal appearance had fooled me, but the hero was actually the first king of Valschein. I couldn’t trust someone who would betray his loyal vassal so easily. I didn’t want to work with him to find a way back to the land of the living nor could I allow him to come back to life.

Even after gaining an ally, the Demon Lord stared at his enemy with an expressionless look on his face that rivaled my own.

“I agree. You can’t trust that thing, all dressed up like a king.”

“By the way, what should I call you?” I asked. “Would you prefer I use your name?”

“Demon Lord is fine. He goes by ‘King,’ so why don’t I play along?”

Before he died, the Demon Lord had told me his name. I wanted to take this opportunity to use it, but he’d stopped me.

I don’t think you have to counter him with your own title. I could call you both by your names, if you’d like. I’m technically a member of the aristocracy, so the name of the first king is well within my scope of knowledge. Oh, it’s a long name, though. I guess Hero and Demon Lord are fine.

The Demon Lord didn’t ask about how I died or my right half being missing. He just stood there, glaring at the hero with displeasure. With his eyes still locked on the hero, the Demon Lord pulled out a black notebook and scribbled something in it.

Can he write properly without looking down? Also, what’s he writing in there? Curious, I slowly made my way closer to him to sneak a glance, but right as I got close enough he shut the notebook. It didn’t seem like he’d noticed me, just that he was finished writing.

The Demon Lord suddenly sniffed and asked, “What’s this smell?”

“Smell...? Oh, maybe it’s my perfume.”

“You have good taste.”

I'd only used a tiny bit, so I was surprised that the Demon Lord noticed. I had thought he was another Yumiella-type—someone who didn't care about things like flowers and perfume—so it was pretty unexpected. I pulled out the perfume that the cat-eared man—no, Quartus—had given me and handed it to the Demon Lord.

“So this is it... Can I test it?”

“Go ahead,” I said.

The Demon Lord sprayed some onto his black notebook and enjoyed the scent. With his notebook open and his eyes closed, he mumbled, “It's nice.”

I'll use this opportunity to peek at what he wrote.

“Ugh, he's so annoying! Also, I saw that girl for the first time in a while, and she was split in half! I was so surprised!!!”

I'm going to pretend I didn't see that...

The Demon Lord handed the perfume bottle back to me, and I quickly worked to erase my memory. *I need to focus on the situation at hand. I may have the Demon Lord on my side, but our opponent is the hero. This might be a difficult battle since I only have my left side.*

Seeing that I'd betrayed him, the hero let out a troubled laugh. “Why are you doing this? I thought you wanted to come back to life too.”

“Because I know what happened between you two. You betrayed him, then sealed him away for centuries... Are you aware of what you did?!” I said, pointing an accusatory finger.

Though he acted like a saint, I knew the hero's true nature. After founding the Kingdom of Valschein, he demoted the Demon Lord since he was done with him, ruined his reputation, and to top it all off, he sent his soldiers to fight him and seal him away. He was unbelievably cruel!

A dramatically saddened look washed over the hero's face. “I guess you would know if you met him while you were alive. It's all my fault—I'll admit to that. But it wasn't my intention—”

“Enough!” the Demon Lord fumed, interrupting the hero's explanation. “I

don't want to hear your excuses."

"Haven't I told you countless times?! It was better that you stayed out of the capital for a bit. The fear people felt for you after your accomplishments while we were in a state of war would've resolved with time." The hero was giving reasons for what he'd done, but they could all have been made up after the fact. I asked him about the one thing he couldn't make an excuse for.

"Why did you seal him away?"

"Monsters were spawning in hordes, with him at the center. As the king, I couldn't just sit there and do nothing."

Wait...that's actually a fair point. The hero's side of the story was that there were some misunderstandings, which led his former vassal to become the Demon Lord, and without any other choice, he had to seal him away. There was no proof that this was what had happened, but the reasoning was sound.

Oh, but wait, there's still that thing—when I was at his castle, I was told that the first queen used to be with the Demon Lord. The Demon Lord backed off because he wanted them to be happy. The hero is so horrible!

"Her Majesty! The one who was called the saintess! You know what I'm talking about!" I pointed an accusatory finger at him once more, but the hero just gave me a look of confusion.

"What about her?"

"How shameless. If you're going to wreck a relationship, you should expect some resentment."

"Whose relationship did I wreck?"

"Theirs! I know that you broke him and Her Majesty up." There was no excuse he could make here. I could sense the rage the Demon Lord was giving off as well.

I glared at the hero, wondering what kind of excuse he was going to make this time, but he just tilted his head in confusion. "No? I don't think they were ever seeing each other."

Huh? No, no. Don't let him trick you. The Demon Lord and the saintess were

dating, but the hero stole her from him. I heard it all from the Demon Lord.

It felt like the hero had completely destroyed everything I thought I knew about this situation, but the most furious one here was the Demon Lord.

“Don’t play dumb! We were lovers.”

“I knew that you had feelings for her, but...she always thought you were creepy.”

The Demon Lord was at a loss for words.

Why would he say something so horrible? He’s probably trying to destroy the Demon Lord’s relationships by broadcasting these lies. How despicable.

“There’s no point in questioning him after all this time,” the Demon Lord said. “Oh...if only I didn’t have this black hair and these black eyes.”

“Demon Lord...”

Urgh. Why is this world so tough on people with black hair? The hero was probably conditioned to discriminate against those with black hair. He’s putting words in the saintess’s mouth. She was the only one who understood the Demon Lord, and the hero must’ve kept them apart. I feel so bad for the Demon Lord. I’m definitely going to stick on his side until the end.

“No, you’re wrong,” the hero said, looking at the black-haired allies and shaking his head. “It had nothing to do with your black hair. She thought your actions were creepy.” *What? His actions?* “Let’s see. For example...”

The hero began to talk about the past.

One morning, the saintess had woken up and opened her curtains to let in the morning sunlight. She had noticed that there was a piece of paper tied to the branch of a tree outside her window, which was close enough for her to reach. Curious as to what it was, she grabbed it and found it was a love letter from an anonymous sender. Regardless of whether she wanted to return their feelings, she couldn’t respond without knowing who had sent it, which troubled her.

The next morning, another letter was tied to the same branch.

“And the day after that, there was yet another letter tied to the branch.”

That sounds lovely. It would spoil the story, but I checked with the Demon Lord. “So the person who wrote those letters was...”

“Yeah, it was me. What a fond memory.”

I knew it. What a romantic thing to do.

“It’s a romantic way to deliver a letter to someone, but after it happened three days in a row, she got a bit scared,” the hero said. “The saintess left the curtains in her room closed for a while.” *Oh. Things are starting to go downhill.* “After a while, she had completely forgotten about the letters and opened up her curtains out of habit. Outside her window was the tree branch that had letters tied all over it without a single open spot.”

I reflexively yelped out of fear. I had expected a heartwarming love story, but this was a real-life horror story. The thought of the view outside your window transforming into those places in Japanese shrines where you could tie your paper fortune slip onto was...quite creepy.

This isn’t true, right? You weren’t that much of a creep, were you, Demon Lord? You didn’t keep climbing that tree and delivering new love letters, day after day, even though the ones from before hadn’t been read, did you?

The Demon Lord didn’t wait to object. “How is that creepy?!”

So it’s true—you really did it... But wait, even if I find it creepy, the saintess herself might have felt differently. My last ray of hope was destroyed by what the hero said next.

“She was terrified, and she came to my room in tears.”

Oh, so she runs to the hero when she’s scared, not the Demon Lord. I feel so bad for the Demon Lord. I decided to speak on behalf of the man who’d fallen silent.

“A single misunderstanding like that isn’t enough to convince me.”

“I have other stories.”

Wait, hold on. I don’t want to hear any more, but I guess I’ll do my best and listen. No matter what he’s done, I’m going to be on the Demon Lord’s side.

“He kept nearly bumping into her multiple times in the same day, pretending

it was all a coincidence.”

“Ugh...”

“There was one time when she returned to her room and found it filled with red roses.”

“Gross...” The word slipped out of my mouth unintentionally. Thinking I’d messed up, I turned to the Demon Lord who looked at me with shock.

“Huh?”

Oh, but if I imagine Patrick doing it, I don’t find it gross at all. I would actually be happy. All right, now I can tell him how I really feel and back him up.

“I would be happy to receive red roses like that. Anyone would love getting a gift like that from someone they like!”

“That’s what I thought... So why did you say it was gross?”

“W-Well, I said that because I first imagined what it would be like if someone I didn’t know that well suddenly did that to me... Oh.”

Someone you don’t know that well suddenly gifting you things... That’s probably why she found the Demon Lord creepy. It seemed that the Demon Lord hadn’t realized what I’d noticed, so I turned to him so I could smooth things over, but the hero opened his mouth before I could do anything.

“That’s right. She thought you were too much and creepy because you two weren’t even that close but you would suddenly prepare these elaborate gifts for her.”

The Demon Lord still maintained his expressionless demeanor, but I probably wasn’t imagining that his eyes were a bit teary. *I see. So the hero didn’t get in the way of the Demon Lord’s relationship nor was he sealed away for unfair reasons...*

I slowly made my way to the hero’s side and turned around to face the Demon Lord. He looked at me with disbelief.

“You’re going to betray me too...?”

“Too”? *I mean, what I’m doing is definitely betrayal, but I think the hero’s*

actions are up for debate.

“Sta—”

“Stah?”

I was about to say that I didn’t want to side with a stalker, but I didn’t want to further break the Demon Lord’s heart. *I think it will be better for the Demon Lord if I betray him for selfish reasons.*

“Um... Oh! I just think I’ll be able to come back to life if I side with him.”

“You shouldn’t listen to someone so uncanny, parading around like a king.”

“That’s what you think of me? I’m hurt.”

“I don’t even know who you are anymore!”

You don’t know who he is...? I know he brought your embarrassing past to light, but I don’t think you have a leg to stand on with that objection. Despite my confusion the hero nodded naturally in response to the statement.

“You’re right.”

“Everything about you has changed, from the way you look to the way you speak!”

“But I seem more like a king this way, don’t I?”

Chapter 6: The Hidden Boss (Right Side) Examines the Hero's Documents

We were in the Royal Capital of Valschein in the basement of the Royal Palace. The first king was in the Kingdom of Twilight, where my deceased left half was. We had come to the forbidden archives, hoping to find something that would help us rescue Left Yumiella.

Even after reading the entries in the black notebook, we still couldn't figure out what it was. There was no record of it being there in the first place, so the owner and the time period it was from were both a mystery. The natural conclusion would be that it had somehow slipped into the archives, but it was unclear who would've brought it and how they would've infiltrated the palace to get in here.

After reading the entries, all we could deduce was that they had likely been written by a young woman. All we could do was tilt our heads in confusion. Eleanora was the only one fervently reading through the entries.

"I can really relate to this person! I wonder what became of their romance..."

The owner seemingly had unrequited feelings for someone, so I could see why their thoughts would resonate with Eleanora, who was a professional when it came to one-sided feelings that would never go anywhere.

It was decided that an audit would be done on the archive catalog at a later date, so Ronald kept the notebook for now.

We'd taken a bit of a detour after finding the mysterious object, but we could now get back to what we'd come here for.

It was said that back when the land was in a state of warring, the first king of Valschein founded the kingdom and brought peace to the world...but I had no idea what he was really like as a person. I asked Ronald if there were any

documents that could give insight on his personality, and he carefully pulled out a stack of papers.

“I think these will tell you what kind of person the first king was.”

With gloved hands, Patrick accepted the papers, which had yellowed with age. Since I couldn't move the left half of my body, Patrick flipped through the pages as I read the text. Though the writing seemed to be scribbled, it was quite legible.

“Is this...a diary?”

“Yup. They're written by a close advisor of the first king. I was shocked the first time I read them.”

“Is there that much of a difference from what you knew?”

“Yeah. The first king was much more”—Ronald hesitated before he continued —“awful than I'd thought.”



Month: X Day: Y

I've always thought that it was terrible, but the way the king carries himself is truly awful.

The battles he's been instigating have calmed for now, and in my previous entry I wrote that we could finally settle down and focus on our internal administration. Well, it's true when they say that your biggest enemy is someone close to you.

This afternoon, we received an urgent report about an armed group causing a commotion. They could have been thieves, and there was a good chance they were the remnants of our opponent's army. The king had conveniently just set out to that same area with a handful of soldiers after hearing that our enemy's surviving troops were possibly hiding out there.

It wouldn't be right for the king to have won all his actual battles only to die in

a fight that was a chance occurrence.

After reporting this to the lieutenant, he immediately left with a vanguard unit. Depending on the number of opponent forces, a rearguard unit could be needed as well.

The king was running around, trying to build a formation with his troops, when the lieutenant found him and brought him back.

We were only able to enjoy the king's safe return for a moment. The group that we'd received a report on were actually members of the king's faction. The king fumed that whoever reported the group was a scoundrel, but I didn't see a need to punish a subject who had just made a mistake.

When the orderly troops from the lieutenant's unit brought the king back, all I could see was a bandit being arrested by the army. He had stubble and was clad in simple armor that prioritized mobility. He had a machete-like sword that was suited for chopping. He was yelling as he spoke, and he had an excessive laugh that sounded like someone going, "Gah hah hah!"

Each aspect of him on its own was unbelievable behavior for someone who'd become the leader of a large kingdom. He seemed like a thief or a mercenary—at best, he was the chief of a barbarian tribe.

It was quite pathetic for our king to be like this.

When I thanked the lieutenant for the unnecessary work he had to do, he gave me a small smile and said he was just glad that the king was safe. It doesn't feel right that the lieutenant, who is incredibly loyal, is hated for being cold and cruel.

Month: Q Day: S

I've always thought it was terrible, but the king's lack of intelligence is truly awful.

The negotiations that have been going on for quite some time are finally showing results, and tomorrow we will finally be able to meet Lord Ashbatten face-to-face. It's clear to anyone that the results of our meeting tomorrow will greatly sway the future of the Kingdom of Valschein, but...the king doesn't seem to understand anything.

The Kingdom of Valschein expanded its territory with tremendous momentum, which left the Ashbattens highly guarded towards us. Naturally, we have no intention of invading the Ashbatten land, which could turn into a complete fortress where every citizen is a soldier at any moment.

At this rate, we're going to end up in a never-ending staring contest where both sides are inviolable. That would be a form of peace, but there would be many concerns remaining. We would have no guarantee that Lord Ashbatten would stay cooped up in his own territory, and in the future there could be calls from Valschein for the takedown of the Ashbattens. To avoid that, it's imperative that we build a relationship with Lord Ashbatten.

At minimum, we want an alliance with him so the kingdom will be on friendly terms with his territory. Ideally, we'd like for the Ashbattens to join the Kingdom of Valschein. Considering they would be a defensive force on our border, there would be many advantages to the Ashbatten territory becoming a part of the kingdom, even if it means we have to beg them and give them incentives in the form of taxes and material goods.

I explained all of that to the king, but it didn't seem like he really understood.

"I'm kinda stupid, so I don't really get it. Why don't we just attack 'em like we always do?" These were his words. The fact that he was grouping Lord Ashbatten together with any old powerful family showed that he truly did not understand.

I was quite busy with my preparations for tomorrow, but I exercised ingenuity and explained the situation to him using dolls and performing two roles on my own.

“This Ashbatten place, was it? Let’s just attack ’em like usual.”

“No, no. There are four reasons that won’t fly, so let me explain ’em to you in order.”

“Tell me, tell me!”

I carefully and thoroughly explained the situation, but the king still seemed like he wasn’t understanding.

I’m incredibly worried for tomorrow.

Month: Q Day: T

I’ve always thought it was terrible, but the king’s attitude is truly awful.

Today was the day of our meeting. My worries from yesterday were completely warranted.

Lord Ashbatten’s castle is the embodiment of simplicity and solidity. Comfort is secondary—it is a castle with the sole priority of keeping enemies out.

They were probably completely prepared for any intruders as well. If our meeting didn’t go well, it was possible that our lives would be in danger.

Our plan was to show our sincerity and gain the Ashbattens’ trust by sending in the king himself to such a dangerous place, but...we shouldn’t have brought the king with us. Sure, we might’ve made a terrible impression on Lord Ashbatten if the king weren’t present, but that would’ve been better than that idiot being there.

Lord Ashbatten treated us graciously and welcomed us as guests, but the king’s attitude was horrible. Throughout the entire meeting, from start to finish, he shot Lord Ashbatten suspicious looks, and repeatedly said something to the effect of “Are you lying about being strong?”

Because I’d spent yesterday going on about what an incredible man Lord Ashbatten is, it seemed that I had hurt the king’s pride. In that case, I could be at fault for his attitude, but I believe the king would’ve been just as rude even if

I hadn't tried to explain who the Ashbattens were to him.

Eventually, he started blatantly challenging Lord Ashbatten with inflammatory statements like "The truth will be clear if we just fight. Take me down, if you even can." I don't know what I would've done if the lieutenant hadn't kept him in check.

In head-to-head combat, the king would probably win. There couldn't possibly be any individual who is stronger than the king. But Lord Ashbatten has a greatness that could make up for the difference in their levels. As the lord chuckled about how the king was an interesting young man, I, the lieutenant, and of course the king were all intimidated.

After the lieutenant brought the king outside, I apologized, ready to trade my life for his forgiveness... Perhaps he understood that we have no intention of opposing the Ashbattens. Our meeting was rescheduled for tomorrow, but it's possible that we'll be killed tonight. If that's the case, this record will become my will.

Everything about the king is unbelievably awful, but he's not actually a bad person. He has a kind heart that is pained whenever his people suffer as a result of war, but his short temper overrides it. The slightest provocation would send him into a rage and turn what could've been a small squabble into a full-on war.

I'm glad to have been by the side of such a... No, this might be my last will and testament. I'll write how I truly feel.

I wish I had served someone a bit more sensible. He may be my king, but there are too many aspects about him that are just awful.



"That's what you meant when you said he was awful...?"

It was true. The first king was much more awful than I'd expected, but...I hadn't expected him to be awful in that sort of sense. Patrick, who'd been reading the advisor's diary beside me, was also at a loss for words.

Ronald had obviously misled us, and he flashed a smile that was awful in a completely different sense. “What do you think? He’s terrible, isn’t he?”

“He’s not a person with a terrible personality who likes to mislead people and have fun watching them be shocked.”

“Come on,” Ronald said, grinning with that plastered smile of his. I’d expected the first king to be awful in the same way that Ronald was.

The first king used his political power to demote the Demon Lord, who had helped found the kingdom... That doesn’t match up with the stupid king with a bad attitude who doesn’t know how to carry himself that appears in these records.

I wasn’t going to argue that the first king wasn’t similar to a selfish tyrant, but the advisor’s diary didn’t make him seem like an oppressive dictator. Though the advisor complained, they undoubtedly revered their king.

Oh, that’s right! Patrick’s ancestors were mentioned too. Looking back on the history, I’m pretty sure their negotiations went well and Lord Ashbatten became a margrave.

“Your family’s a tribe of warriors,” I said to him.

“You’re getting off topic.”

Patrick had a look on his face that said, “It’s about my family, and also about the past, so it has nothing to do with me personally,” but when it came to one-on-one battles, it was totally possible that my Pat-Pat was the strongest of all the Ashbattens.

While we were going on a tangent, Ronald had prepared other documents for us.

“You should read these if you want to learn more about the falling out between the first king and the Demon Lord.” Ronald brought over a piece of paper that was probably a letter. He handed it to me, and I began to read, but...

“What kingdom’s language is this?”

“This is the same language that we use every day. This is a letter that the king wrote to his younger brother. The time period is around when Valschein grew

to its current size.”

“Does that mean this is an older writing system?”

“There have been some slight changes over time, but the writing system hasn’t changed that much. You were able to read that diary without any issues, right?”

That’s right. This letter would’ve been written a few years after those diary entries. I was able to read the advisor’s diary with no problems, but the letter written by the first king himself was completely illegible. Does that mean it’s in a code? No, Ronald said it’s the same language we use every day... So it’s not a code, nor an unfamiliar language...

“Did he just have terrible handwriting?”

“He just had a unique way of writing...”

It seemed that on top of his other flaws, the first king also had terrible penmanship. *Was his brother even able to read this? Oh, the first king’s younger brother is the guy who founded the Hillrose family duchy—in other words, he’s Ronald and Eleanora’s ancestor.*

I’d forgotten that these people that I interacted with on a regular basis were from a historically famous family. *I’m pretty sure that back then the Dolknesses weren’t even nobles—the head of the family was a yeoman to someone, or something like that.*

A letter between the first king and the first duke sounded like it could contain some valuable information, but it was useless if I couldn’t read it. The letters were a complete mess, like if someone had written in an unstable notepad while standing, so I had to just start with the parts I could make out and infer the rest.

“I think I can make this part out,” I said. “‘Cull back’...?”

“Oh, that part says ‘call back.’”

“Call? Doesn’t it look like ‘cull’? No matter how you mess up an ‘a,’ it wouldn’t look like a ‘u.’”

“You’re correct! Technically, it says, ‘cull back.’”

Could it be that on top of horrible penmanship, the text in this is also just a mess? Can I just tear up this letter?

We'd finally gotten far enough in the letter to make out the important information. According to Ronald, there had been members of the royal family and intellectuals of the kingdom who had deciphered the contents of this letter, but because of its contents, no one created a legible transcription.

Even though we had the original text before us, Ronald began sharing with us the transcription of the text, which had only been passed down orally.

At the time of the founding of the kingdom, the Demon Lord was in charge of purging Valschein of traitors. The leader, who was brash, wild, and had plenty of heart, and his right-hand man, who was feared for being heartless—the hero and the Demon Lord were functioning well as the duo leading the new kingdom.

"I've heard that the first king was quite feared as well," I said, interrupting Ronald.

"The Demon Lord was much more feared, because he was expressionless as he somberly did his work," Patrick said, clarifying immediately.

"That's exactly it," Ronald said. "I'm going to continue, then." Ronald's explanation of the ancient text continued.

The Demon Lord had been working successfully as the cruel vice-commander of the new kingdom, but around the time that Valschein had grown to its current size, things started to change. He didn't fit into the peaceful period.

The people of the kingdom were overly fearful of the Demon Lord, who had a sensitive, human heart that was in pain when he realized the situation he was in. He was able to endure the citizens' fear when the kingdom was still warring because he thought it would help maintain moral order, but it was terrible to be treated the same way in a time of peace. He'd taken down enemies for the sake of his allies, but for some reason, he was hated by those very allies.

"I understand that the Demon Lord was struggling back then, but this letter is

one that the first king sent to the duke, right? What does it have to do with the Demon Lord?”

“All of that was just the preamble to set things up. As the Demon Lord was facing the situation I’ve explained, the first king wrote down his thoughts and how he handled things.”

The explanation continued.

The first king had come up with a solution for the Demon Lord’s situation. The Demon Lord was to temporarily disappear from the public eye. The king would move him to an old, isolated castle far from the Royal Capital and wait until his terrible reputation had faded.

The king had figured that it would be a good opportunity for the Demon Lord to rest, since he was both physically and emotionally exhausted. He had also thought that being in a remote area wouldn’t be a struggle for the Demon Lord, since he wasn’t much of a people person.

The king had wanted the Demon Lord to eventually return to the Royal Capital at which time the king would give him an important position in his court.

“That’s the general gist of it, though his phrasing and word choice are a lot rougher around the edges.” With that, Ronald concluded his explanation of the letter’s contents.

I hadn’t known that the first king had had such intentions. I’d been told by the Demon Lord himself that he was sent away because the king felt that he was in his way. *Maybe the Demon Lord just misunderstood what was going on.*

Oh, right, the saintess! The Demon Lord said he resented the first king for stealing the woman he loved. What Ronald just told us makes it sound like there was just a misunderstanding in an otherwise positive relationship, but there were probably some romantic troubles as well.

“Is everything in that letter true?”

“If the contents are manufactured, then there’s no way to tell, but I don’t think it’s all exactly the truth because there’s probably some bias in the writer’s perspective.” Ronald easily admitted to the uncertainty towards the

truthfulness of the letter's contents. I was surprised, and Ronald admitted to yet another thing. "I'm not trying to cover for the first king or anything like that."

"I know. We're the ones who came to you to learn about him in the first place."

"This letter probably doesn't perfectly reflect the truth, but I do think it's pretty accurate, which is why I showed it to you. I hope you'll have a little faith in my choices."

There was no way to tell if the king was actually going to call the Demon Lord back to the Royal Capital, but if we were to believe this, he had clearly stated to his younger brother, who founded the Hillrose duchy, that he was going to eventually have him return. Perhaps that was enough to make it more reliable information than any diary or history book.

Which parts were true, and which were lies? There was no doubt that the version of the story I'd heard from the Demon Lord had some of his own biased perspective in it as well. If we could just speak to the hero and Demon Lord themselves, we could probably get to the truth of the situation, but an opportunity like that would never come in my lifetime.

I'm still interested in that one topic, though.

"Is there any information about the first king and Demon Lord being romantic rivals?"

"Who knows," Ronald said.

"There aren't any?"

"Even if I were to have some witness statements from people back then about their romantic entanglements, would you trust them?" Ronald showed no signs of trying to even look for any documents.

That's fair. I don't think I'd trust them, whether they came from the involved parties themselves or from a third party. Information about which people are dating and who likes who are usually pretty wrong... I guess I'm good on this romantic rival topic, I thought as I shook my head. Ronald then pulled out another document he'd prepared.

“I think this is the last one. It’s something the first king wrote towards the end of his life.” Ronald then handed me a properly bound book. He opened it up to show us the contents, but the pages were much too crisp and clean. This probably wasn’t the original, but a copy.

Scanning through the text, it looked like it was written for someone. First was the diary that had sprinkles of personal complaints, which was followed by a letter from one individual to another... This third document was different from those two.

Seeing this book, Eleanora, who’d been wandering around the archive as if she were bored, finally spoke up. “I’ve seen that book before!”

I think you’re mistaken, Eleanora. It was surely her first time coming here, and there was no way Ronald would bring this document out, let alone put it somewhere his younger sister could see. I’d expected Ronald to correct her and move on, but he surprisingly nodded in agreement.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if you have. This used to be in the possession of the Hillrose family. It used to be passed down within the family, but it was moved here.”

“I’ve definitely seen it before!” Eleanora repeated.

“Which room did you see it in? I believe Father said not to go into the room where it was stored.”

Eleanora fell silent for a moment. “I don’t think I’ve seen that book before...”

Setting aside whether or not Eleanora had explored the room that was off-limits, this book had historically been the Hillroses’ property. Since the Hillrose family duchy was no longer, they’d probably had it moved.

To summarize, the Hillrose family duchy had originally been established to support the royal family. The older brother was the king, while the younger was a duke—it wasn’t uncommon to appoint trusted people into high positions to help run the kingdom.

Though Valschein was currently stable, when the kingdom was first founded, things were quite rocky. The administration was pretty much established, but

right before they had an official ceremony to celebrate the founding of the kingdom, the Demon Lord, consumed by anger and resentment, manipulated a horde of beasts into attacking Valschein. The first king was incredibly skilled when it came to battle if nothing else, so he was able to suppress the horde of monsters and seal away the Demon Lord.

A kingdom ruled by the hero that sealed away the Demon Lord—the king had obtained the ultimate legend for how the kingdom came to be, and he couldn't not use it. Though, in reality, the Kingdom of Valschein was ready to fall apart at any moment.

“Was that because the first king was only skilled at fighting and nothing else?”

“That would be the natural conclusion to draw, but whoever wrote this didn't think so.”

Oh, right. He suddenly just started explaining things so I didn't think about it, but who wrote this book?

I continued reading. The author had deduced that the reason the kingdom was so unstable was because the Demon Lord was gone. There were more powerful noble families who were unhappy with the king than in the past. They'd first thought that the desires they'd been suppressing during the state of war were now exploding since things were peaceful, but they had been wrong.

When things were going smoothly, the powerful families all directed their dissatisfaction towards the Demon Lord, who was austere and couldn't take a joke. The king would then, though haphazardly, come up with a compromise and make both parties accept the terms. The Demon Lord aided the king as his second-in-command by using fear behind the scenes. It was unclear whether the Demon Lord was doing this intentionally, but it was quite effective.

However, whoever wrote this text wasn't able to use fear quite as well, so instead of having the people's complaints directed at them, they decided to become a vehicle for those feelings. They would oppose the royal family on purpose and gather all the rebellious actors of the kingdom, making sure to keep them at an appropriate level of happiness. Finally, once their despicable desires had piled up to the brim, they were going to get rid of all these rebellious actors, along with themselves.

“Was this written by...?”

“It’s exactly who you’re thinking.”

I remembered hearing this story somewhere. This was written by the first Duke of Hillrose to outline the role of the Hillrose family. The Hillroses had stored, made copies, and passed down this book, and the successive dukes each fulfilled their duties.

That role had been continuously executed throughout generations, and as a result, Eleanora’s father carried out the final job, which led to the duchy finally ending.

I stood there in awe at the Hillrose family while Ronald, who could’ve been the head of said family, spoke in an unconcerned manner.

“Well, the Hillroses don’t really matter right now.”

“I wouldn’t say they don’t matter.”

“Aren’t you here for information about the first king? It’s fine. My father managed to get out of it with his life anyway.”

You’re not wrong, but... I was a bit unhappy that Eleanora had a blank look on her face as she listened, which made it hard to tell if she was understanding what we were discussing or not, but I kept reading until we reached the information relevant to the hero.

To summarize once more, the king had been quite concerned with the fact that he’d lost the Demon Lord and that he’d unintentionally pushed someone into the role of a convenient target for the sake of the kingdom. Then, after the final battle, he’d ended up sealing away the Demon Lord. Those who hated the Demon Lord stopped the king’s letter from reaching him, which left the two to battle without a chance to clear up their misunderstandings.

Towards the end of the king’s life, after hearing the role that the first Duke of Hillrose had established for himself, the king had been filled with even more regret.

He had thought that he wasn’t fit to be king—that he didn’t have the skills to rule over a kingdom, and that caused those around him to struggle. He had

thought that if he had been a better ruler, the Demon Lord wouldn't have been feared and isolated. The first king had felt that it was because he wasn't fit to be king that his friend turned into a being known as the Demon Lord.

On top of everything, his own brother was about to go down a similar path as the Demon Lord. Everything was because he wasn't a skilled enough ruler. If he had been a perfect regal king, he thought he would've been able to lead the Kingdom of Valschein without sacrificing everything.

The first king wanted to start over with the founding of the kingdom. If not, he wanted to at least make it so that he'd never established this kingdom. With such regrets in his heart, the sickly king deliriously mumbled those thoughts.

“Because of the sort of man my older brother is, I established the Hillrose duchy. I beg my descendants reading this—there is no need to force yourself to carry out the role of this family, but if you want to support the king of your generation, I hope you will carry on my wishes.”

With that, the text in the book concluded.

The first Duke of Hillrose's determination was incredible, but even more than that, I was shocked by the first king's regrets. The king was a barbarian who lacked both intelligence and proper behavior, contrary to my earlier impression of him. That very barbarian hadn't wanted his relationship with the Demon Lord to collapse, but he'd ended up becoming the hero. That hero died, his heart full of regret for the people who were sacrificed to establish his kingdom.

My impression of the king had changed several times in this short period of time. The one thing that stayed consistent about every version of him was that he was never very kingly.

Chapter 7: The Hidden Boss (Left Side) Fights the Hero

“But I seem more like a king this way, don’t I?” After being told that everything about him, including the way he looked, had changed, the hero responded without objecting in the slightest.

I stood there silently, unable to wrap my head around what was going on, and the Demon Lord roared in anger.

“You weren’t like that before! The way you’re dressed so neatly and that gentle speech of yours—it’s all uncharacteristic of you!”

“I couldn’t care less about being myself. You yourself even told me I should act more like a king.”

Hearing their conversation, I was starting to understand. There was no doubt that the hero was the first king of Valschein, but surface-level elements, like his appearance and the way he spoke, had drastically changed.

This was the Kingdom of Twilight—a world where someone’s regrets from when they were alive would change them. After being here for so long, the hero had probably morphed into something unrecognizable from his past self.

I’d felt it since I first met the hero. There was something elegant, confident, and kind about him... No, there was no need for all those embellishments. I could describe it in one word: he seemed like a king. The man looked like a king, acted like a king, spoke like a king, and even had the voice of a king.

The endlessly regal man said in a thoroughly regal tone, “I think things would’ve been better if I had been this sort of person.”

“How dare you! The one I resolved to serve was the boorish version of you! Also, stop speaking in such a creepy manner.”

“You’re the last person who should be commenting on my manner of speech.”

“What is wrong with the way I speak?!” the Demon Lord fumed. He immediately became worried and turned to me. “It’s not weird, is it...?” *He’s totally lost confidence after finding out his crush had no feelings for him.*

The Demon Lord’s manner of speech was dated and not something I was familiar with in current times, but he was from the past. “There’s nothing strange about it,” I reassured him. “You’re from a different time period.”

The hero immediately stepped in with some additional context. “No one spoke like him when we were alive.”

“Then it’s weird!”

You’ll just have to accept it. If the hero had started it, I could’ve said, “Everyone has the right to speak in the way they want,” but the Demon Lord had brought it up himself.

“Th-The way I speak has nothing to do with this matter... The fact that I can’t stand the way he is now is a separate issue.” His speech was hesitant as he tried to alter it a bit.

Hey, buddy, you’re not doing any better.

Setting aside the Demon Lord’s manner of speech, I was curious about what the hero was like before he’d changed in the Kingdom of Twilight. *He probably wasn’t this regal of a person...*

“What was he originally like?” I asked the Demon Lord.

“He was a crude, violent man. He was skilled in battle and nothing else—he wasn’t fit to be king.”

He was that awful? Though the Demon Lord’s words were quite harsh, the hero just chuckled and said, “That’s right.”

It seemed that the description was the truth. Since I only knew the hero he was now, I couldn’t imagine it at all.

“When I tried to guard an area, the people thought I was a thief.”

“Right,” the Demon Lord agreed. “You just ran over, asking where the thieves were.”

“I couldn’t mind my manners in front of an ally, and we almost ended up in an unnecessary battle.”

“The elderly Lord Ashbatten was terrifying.”

“I tried to combine the bones of a monkey and a fish and sell it, saying it was to procure military funding.”

“The mermaid mummy. I’m sure it would’ve sold if I hadn’t stopped you.”

What...? He sounds so awful. The Demon Lord had his fair share of terrible moments, but the hero has plenty of his own awful stories.

It seemed that he’d acted like any old bandit, and though it was only an attempt, he’d tried to scam people. There were plenty of tales that depicted the first king’s bravery, but now that I knew what he was really like, they all sounded like the violent exploits of a delinquent.

“Despite the kind of man you were, even though you were the kind of person I detested the most...I still wanted you to be the king.”

“Thank you. The days we spent running around together, dreaming of building a kingdom, were wonderful.”

“Don’t thank me! You’re supposed to be picking a fight with me for saying all those horrible things about you! The one I vowed to follow was the boorish man with a strong sense of duty!”

Though the hero had acted like a barbarian in his youth, he seemed to be well-liked. With that brash intensity driving him, he had built a kingdom. What had he regretted to end up in his current state? I had an idea—he probably wished that he had been more of a king. *Does that mean he wants to come back to life and get another shot at being king?*

The Demon Lord questioned the core of his desires, which I was curious about.

“What is it that you wish for enough to turn yourself into *that*? What do you want to come back to life for?”

The prosperity of his kingdom, or something, right? The king, who’d become the most king-like person, had to have desires that were just as kingly.

Just as I'd expected, he voiced his wishes in a confident and regal manner. "I wish for the downfall of the Kingdom of Valschein."

The first king of the Kingdom of Valschein yearned for the collapse of his kingdom. The man who behaved like the perfect king harbored desires opposite what was expected of a king, and was trying to come back to life.

"Why...?"

"The Kingdom of Valschein is a flawed kingdom built upon countless sacrifices. Such a kingdom should've never existed in the first place."

I could understand why he would regret his falling out with the Demon Lord, but destroying a whole kingdom felt a little overboard. *Wouldn't it be fine if the person who made the sacrifice says it's fine?* I wondered and glanced over at the Demon Lord.

"He's not the only one," the hero continued. "My younger brother established the Hillrose duchy because there would be stability in the kingdom if we established an opposing force. His descendants are devoted to playing the villain, all while knowing it'll end in ruin."

"Well..."

"How does that make you feel? I'm sure you had no idea, but there are plenty of stories like that about the kingdom."

No, I do know. A descendant of your younger brother is at my house. The family's been ruined already. I should tell him all about the commotion that the duke caused, since I was heavily involved in all that. I turned to look at the hero and...I gasped. I felt like his eyes were going to suck me in, and my words were caught in my throat. *How did I never realize he had such soulless eyes?*

"The regrets I had at the end of my life won't disappear, no matter what," the hero said, looking at me with his firm, lightless eyes.

I moved to betray my ally for the umpteenth time. It probably didn't need to be so deliberately shown, but I stood beside the Demon Lord and faced the hero.

It now felt better than earlier, but the hero's gaze was still terrifying. He tried to appease me with an affable smile as he stared at me with his soulless gaze.

"I'm not trying to burn the kingdom down or anything," the hero explained. "I just want to destroy the system set up by the royal family of Valschein."

"I don't have even a speck of loyalty towards the kingdom, but...this has been a good opportunity to reconsider coming back to life."

After seeing what the hero had become as a result of his regrets at the end of his life, I knew that I couldn't just go along with him and return to the living world.

"Shouldn't you be prioritizing your own resurrection?"

"I don't need to come back to life anymore."

Even if I did, I was going to grow old in several decades and die once more, probably with plenty of regrets. If I were to make coming back to life an option at this moment, I would probably choose to come back alive once more at that point in the future. I would probably obtain a false immortality, coming back to life over and over again until I felt I could die without regrets.

That would be wrong. I couldn't give a logical reason as to why, but I couldn't let such a thing happen.

"I don't need to come back to life," I repeated. "I think we should both accept our deaths."

"I really thought you would be on my side," the hero said, slowly unsheathing the sword on his hip. I'd thought that it wasn't a practical sword because of all the embellishments on the hilt and the sheath, but the blade had a cold, sharp glimmer to it. "Well then, en garde!" The hero swung around his heavy looking sword as he braced for combat.

He doesn't seem that strong, I thought as I stood and watched.

"Be careful!" the Demon Lord said in a panic. "He's coming!"

I'll be fine. You know how strong I am, don't you? I might only have my left half, but I'm stronger than I was back then. The hero's still taking his stance, and he's pretty far, so I don't need to be—

“Wha—!” The hero was right in front of me. He’d closed the distance between us much quicker than I’d expected, and his blade was closing in on my neck.

I was able to perceive his attack, which was as fast as the speed of sound, but my body couldn’t react in time. Even though I didn’t feel any issues just walking around and existing, there were probably some negative effects to only having my left side.

The hero swung his blade with all his might, sweeping sideways at me. “So you can see me. I knew you were strong.”

As his attack landed, I jumped away, successfully avoiding the force of his blade. As I jumped away, the hero’s mumbles faded into the distance. I somehow managed to land on my left leg, then I hopped back to the Demon Lord’s side.

“I can’t believe you’re without a single scratch after one of his attacks.”

“Is my head still attached? He didn’t slash me?”

“You *do* look like you’ve been sliced in half vertically.”

Then I’m fine. I’ve been in half from the beginning.

Though his attack hadn’t worked on me, it didn’t change the fact that I couldn’t dodge it. He was way too fast.

“How’s he so strong?!”

“He’s the man who founded the kingdom. It’s only natural for him to have such strength.”

I’d expected the hero to be about the same as the Demon Lord in strength, but he was incredibly strong. *I thought he sealed away the Demon Lord because he couldn’t beat him... Oh, right. He sealed him away because he didn’t want to kill him.*

Despite the hero’s impressive strength, I still could win. His attacks weren’t doing much against me, and as long as I braced myself, I could probably react to his speed.

Sensing that I had a handle on things, the Demon Lord leisurely opened his

notebook and said, “From how you’re acting, it seems that you won’t have any issues... Hmm?”

Hey, now’s not the time to be writing in your diary, I thought, but before I could complain, the Demon Lord handed his notebook to me. “There’s a message for you.”

“For me?” I glanced at the notebook, and in familiar penmanship I saw the—
worrrrrrgggggaaagggh...

Chapter 8: The Hidden Boss (Right Side) Launches a Counterattack

I'd learned that the first king was awful in a way that was different than I'd initially expected. I'd even learned about the regrets he'd harbored. Though I'd learned about what sort of man this king, who continued to act like one in the Kingdom of Twilight, was, it didn't have any effect on our plans to save my left side.

I had a good idea of what kind of regrets the hero had when he was alive, but that didn't change the fact that there was nothing we could do. We were at a complete dead end. The three of us climbed into a carriage to leave the palace, and I continued racking my brain for ideas.

For now, we were headed to the Dolkness estate in the Royal Capital. I loved traveling on foot, but with the left side of my body not moving, it was a pain to walk around.

A soft, sweet scent filled the carriage, and Patrick and I were talking, both dejected.

"We're at a total dead end... What should we do?"

"We might have not gotten any results, but we knew it was a long shot. There's no point in being disappointed."

"It would be nice if we at least had a way to communicate with the Kingdom of Twilight."

"Your left side is definitely the wild card. It would be nice if she could make a move somehow."

I guess we'll just have to wait. Patrick and I both sighed at the same time.

Silence took over the carriage. I had no desire for small talk, and Patrick probably felt the same. As for Eleanora...

Wait. Why is Eleanora quiet? It was unnatural for her, a girl who was always reliably in high spirits, to not participate in our conversation. I looked over and saw her fervently reading something. Each time she flipped through the pages enthusiastically, the scent wafted over.

Did she bring a book with her? Also, it's rare that she's reading at all.

"Lady Eleanora, what do you have there?"

Eleanora looked up, beaming with an innocent smile as she showed off the black notebook. "I was curious, so I brought it with me!"

Ah, her carefree smile is so bright. I had no doubt that crime would disappear from this world if all of humanity looked as pure and innocent as she did. *Still, our dear Eleanora has taken a confidential document belonging to the kingdom without permission. She's totally guilty.*

"You can't do that! Why did you take it?!"

"It had a wonderful scent, and the writing inside was also lovely... I just couldn't help myself."

"You couldn't help yourself...?"

"I'm sorry. I did it on a whim."

She sounds like someone who just got arrested. It seemed that the person we had thought was the last person we should allow into the archives was in fact someone we shouldn't have let in. *This is bad. Ronald's probably noticed by now. I hope he'll let us off easy since the culprit is his younger sister.*

"Come on, give that to me. We're returning it right away."

"Just a little more! Just let me have it for a little longer!"

I did my best to pull the notebook from a whining Eleanora with only my right hand, but I ended up dropping it. The impact made the pages flip to the final page. I was forced to reunite with the nonsensical entries.

"Ugh, he's so annoying! Also, I saw that girl for the first time in a while, and she was split in half! I was so surprised!!!"

"I hate that he's called 'Hero.'"

"He tricked Yumi-Yumi! I need to show her what he's really like!"

"I won't let you destroy the Kingdom of Valschein! I won't let you leave Twilight!"

Huh? The Kingdom of Twilight? The very thing I was after was written there. I thought I might be hallucinating, so I looked over at Patrick. He was also staring at the notebook in disbelief.

"Patrick, is this...?"

"There've been changes from when we last saw it. 'Surprised' should've been the last word written."

"Right? Also, it mentions the Kingdom of Twilight."

When did these entries get added? Also, why does the writer know about the Kingdom of Twilight? I turned to interrogate Eleanora, the only person who could've added to the entries.

"Did you write in this notebook, Lady Eleanora?"

"I didn't. This adorable penmanship is the owner's."

Eleanora wouldn't lie. If she had added onto the entries, she would've unabashedly admitted it too. On top of that, just as she had pointed out, the distinct, rounded penmanship matched the text that was already in the notebook. The only possible answer was that the words had shown up on their own.

As if to validate my unbelievable theory, a new set of words appeared on the page.

"Yumi-Yumi is on my side now! Yay!"

I can't believe this... I suddenly had an idea, and scribbled something into the notebook.

"Is Yumiella Dolkness there?"

"What?! Mr. Notebook is talking to me? Yumi-Yumi is right next to me!"

Wow, this girl is really friendly. Okay then, if that's the case...

"Please tell her this: 'The left side is a small fry that'd lose to the right side.'"

The next moment, the world trembled. There was no sound nor was there any shaking, but the world had definitely trembled. I couldn't explain why or what had caused it, but the skin on the right side of my body felt that the world was going to end. In that moment, I was the most aware of the fact that I was paralyzed on my left side than I'd been all day.

I wasn't mistaken. Patrick and Eleanora both gulped as well. The horse whinnied, and I held my breath as the driver panicked, trying to calm down the violent horse.

Something was happening.

Something so ominous that it desecrated natural order was nearby. I only remembered to take a breath when I heard Patrick's voice.

"Let's just head outside for now," he said.

In this situation, where there was no information—let alone details—where I, Yumiella Dolkness, felt fear, Patrick was the first to make a move. I looked closely and saw that he was trembling as well. In fact, his voice was shaking when he spoke earlier. Even though I was the most powerful person in the world, I would lose to Patrick in bravery.

Is Eleanora okay? I was so taken aback that I'd forgotten about the girl who I should've been most worried about. I used the courage I got from Patrick and spoke. "Are you all right, Lady Eleanora?"

"All I can do is accept it... There's nothing I can do about it."

It seemed that she had given up. We were in a situation similar to being stuck in a plane that was definitely going to crash, where panic was expected, but people could be surprisingly composed.

People only panicked when there was at least a sliver of chance of surviving as long as you ran quickly. When there was nowhere to run and you had no chance of survival, in situations without even a speck of hope, people became composed—that was the kind of composure Eleanora had.

Of us three, the most to least composed were Eleanora, Patrick, then me. This

was probably because Patrick and I were the only ones who could find a ray of hope in this *thing* that was happening.

It was unsettling how silent things had become outside of the carriage, and I cautiously stepped outside. We scanned our surroundings, looking for the cause of this situation, but we couldn't find anything. It felt like the air of despair had cast a thin veil across the entire world.

The first to notice it was Eleanora. She pointed up at the sky and shouted, "The sky! Up in the sky!"

"What *is* that...?"

It floated in the air, high above the thin clouds. It looked so high up that I couldn't tell if it was in the sky or out in space. Wings sprouted from *its* back. This was an example of an extremely rare phenomenon in which magical energy—which was typically fluid, colorless, and shapeless—took a well-defined and solid form.

The six black wings on only *its* left side undulated, continuously changing shape as they grew larger. The wings themselves were visible from a much greater distance than the human-shaped entity in the center was.

It had a ring floating above *its* head. The ring, black as the undulating wings, multiplied itself several times over into a pattern of concentric circles that looked a bit like Saturn's rings.

It was much too evil to be called an angel, but much too divine to call a devil. Still, calling *it* a god would be sacrilege.

The people of the Royal Capital looked up at *it*. When *it* had last manifested, they had only seen the aftereffects, so it was their first time seeing it for themselves. They just stared as *its* wings spread and *its* halo expanded ever outward.

No one was running—they instinctively knew that it was pointless to run, and they clung to this single clear fact in a maelstrom of incomprehensible circumstances. No one screamed; there was no value in expelling precious air from their lungs or in raising their voices. No one spoke; everyone felt the same

horror, so there was no need to put their thoughts into words. No one prepared a will; it was clear that the people they would leave behind were going to disappear as well. No one fought the futility of such an action requiring no explanation.

It wasn't despair—resignation was closer to what they felt. No matter what action they might take, it would ultimately be pointless, and they had no choice but to accept the reality before them.

The area around *it* fell completely silent. As the residents of the Royal Capital watched, *it* grew larger with every passing second. *Its* black wings and halo spread as if they intended to cover the skies of the whole world...

The black wings and the halo were observable from every corner of the globe. Unrest had spread throughout the world. Those who had the knowledge or the wisdom to understand the nature of what *it* might be were dragged at once into the depths of despair.

Then, Patrick and Eleanora, who were diminutive in comparison to *it*, both sighed.

"Oh, it's just Yumiella."

"It is Yumiella indeed."

No? I'm right here?

"What? What's going on?"

"Wow, it really is Yumiella," Eleanora said once more.

"It's only her left half, so there's no doubt about it."

Can someone explain it to me? I don't really like it when the other characters have a mysterious conversation and the main character is left out of it.

I was still in full crisis mode, but all their nervousness seemed to have dissipated. *Maybe they got so scared of that thing that they've gone crazy? If that's the case, I'm going to start crying.*



They're also being completely incoherent, saying that thing is me...

"Don't tell me you know what that thing is. I've never seen anything like it before."

"It's my second time," Patrick said.

"Me too," Eleanora chimed in.

It seemed that the two had indeed lost their minds. *It's over. The world is going to end.* I had no choice but to accept my fate, and I wanted to at least be on the same page as the two people I loved. Though their conversation was nonsensical and empty, I joined in.

"That couldn't be an Ultimate Celestial Suppression Weapon, could—"

"It's you."

"It's you, Yumiella."

Me? I'm right here though. Also, I'm not half a person like... Oh. That thing only has a left side. Are they accusing me just because I'm missing half of myself?

"I'm not the only one who's missing a half!"

"You definitely are."

Maybe it's a monster that was born like that. I searched for a rebuttal, desperate to not accept it, and Patrick continued.

"Just accept it. You're the only one who has *that* much magical energy. Plus it appeared right above us, and it only has a left half... It makes too much sense to be a coincidence."

I guess that's true...? It's hard to believe, but if Patrick says so, maybe it's true... My left side that I'd been searching for had come back on her own. Things were all settled now. *Yumiella gets to return to her original form. Happily ever after!*

"So...hypothetically speaking, if that *is* my left side, do you think I could talk to her?"

"I think she'll evaporate the whole planet if we leave her as is."

I knew it. That's an Ultimate Celestial Suppression Weapon.

Even if that was my other half, if I couldn't communicate with her, she was no different from an ultimate weapon. It would be nice if I had some kind of distinct weakness, but as everyone knew, I was invincible and the strongest being.

This should've still been a crisis situation, but ever since he realized that thing was me, Patrick seemed calm.

"What are we going to do if we can't talk to it?"

"Leave it to me. It's my second time taking it down."

"What did you do last time?"

"There's a surefire way to win in this situation...! 'Yumiella is the strongest! Yumiella is the strongest!'"

Sir Patrick?! What do I do? Patrick just broke. The more normal and calm someone was on a regular basis, the more terrifying it was when they started behaving strangely. I was completely horrified by Patrick's mysterious actions.

I looked to Eleanora for help. Though she was surprised by Patrick's voice, she immediately realized something and joined in on his chanting.

"Yumiella is the strongest! She's the strongest in the world!"

"Yumiella is the strongest!" Patrick continued to chant. "Yumiella is the strongest!"

Eleanora's broken too?! What are you two doing? Why are you screaming something that's an obvious fact?

I thought maybe this could actually be a way to win, but that thing in the sky wasn't changing at all. Soon after, their strange chanting ended.

"There aren't any changes. Last time this calmed it down."

"The cause has to be something related to strength of levels, so this method should be correct," Eleanora pointed out.

Though they had supposedly lost their minds, they both seemed to be on the same page. *Was that chanting some form of harmonization? Are Patrick and*

Eleanora so in sync that they can have conversations that I don't understand a single lick of?

"My fiancé and my best friend are— Urgh, my brain is going to break."

"I think we should explain what's going on to Yumiella," Eleanora suggested.

"Let's do that," Patrick said, agreeing.

They couldn't just stand there and watch, so they explained the situation to me, and I was able to avoid my brain breaking.

Apparently, the last time this had happened was because I was teased for being weak. After the teasing, I turned into a similar form to that thing in the sky, and my memories of it had disappeared when I'd transformed back. That was why they had tried to resolve the issue this time by yelling that I was the strongest.

"I know how I seem, but would I really turn into *that* just from being called weak?"

"You would, which is why we have a problem."

"I see... That means that someone teased my left side, who was in the Kingdom of Twilight, about being weak, right?"

"I think that's what happened. Troublemakers exist everywhere," Patrick said, his irritation uncharacteristically apparent on his face.

He's right. What a troublemaker. Who would say that to my left side? Left Yumiella may be a small fry that would lose to Right Yumiella, aka me, but there are some things you just shouldn't— Oh!

I'd forgotten all about it because of all the chaos of this sudden occurrence—I'd forgotten about what I was doing right before *it* had appeared. I looked inside the black notebook that was still in my hands.

"Please tell her this: 'The left side is a small fry that'd lose to the right side.'"

This might be the cause. Am I the troublemaker?

I froze, and Patrick mistook it for shock.

"Don't feel too bad about it. The person who caused this is responsible too."

“Um, about that...”

“Even if she only has half herself, whoever told Yumiella that she’s weak is definitely at fault!” Eleanora said.

“I’m sorry. I’m the one who caused this.”

I couldn’t hide the truth when they were trying so hard to take my side. I showed them the notebook and explained that my left side had lost control because of my—the right side’s—teasing. I braced myself and was prepared to be yelled at, but Patrick reacted in the complete opposite way.

“I see! That’s why there was no effect when we said Yumiella is the strongest.”

“I get it too!” Eleanora exclaimed. “It’s not Yumiella’s strength that’s important—it’s which side is the strongest!”

“You noticed that too, Lady Eleanora?! Now we’ll be able to use the surefire method!”

My understanding was left behind just like before, but it seemed their method was going to work. I caused an issue, and Patrick was going to clean it up... Things were going to be resolved in the usual manner.

Now confident that they would win, Patrick and Eleanora raised their voices once more.

“Yumiella’s left side is stronger!”

“Yumiella’s left side is the strongest!”

As the right side, I didn’t believe in their “surefire method,” but it had visible results. The black wings floating in the air swayed slightly. My left side hadn’t reacted to anything before and was finally responding to something.

I can’t believe this is all it takes to calm my left side down. What a simpleton. I wouldn’t be affected by someone just stating whether I was strong or weak.

“Yumiella’s left side is the strongest!”

“Yumiella’s left side is so cool!”

I can’t believe my left side is going to lay down her sword after getting a

couple little compliments. How pathetic.

I knew they didn't actually mean the things they were saying, it was obviououououououous. Even mentally, my right side was riririright, my right sidededed my, my, myyyyyggggrrraaaagh.

"Yumiella's left side is the strongest! Yumiella's left side is the strongest!"

"Sir Patrick! Oh no, Yumiella is in trouble!"

"Grrrggggaaargh!"

"Calm down, Yumiella! Your right side is strong too! Your right side is stronger!"

"That's right! Your right side is the strongest!"

Hmm? Um, I, uh, what was I doing? I think Left Yumiella lost control and is floating in the sky or something. I looked up and saw *it* emitting an even more violent aura than I thought it had earlier. At this rate, the world was really going to be destroyed.

"What about your surefire method? You said you had a way to beat it, right?"

"It's over."

"Huh?"

"It's over. The surefire method didn't work."

What happened to your confidence when you first said you had a way out of this? Patrick seemed sure that there was nothing more to do.

"What do we do about it, then?" I asked.

Even if we can't use the previous method, Patrick can surely figure a way out of this.

Patrick looked me right in the eyes and said, "What do we do?"

I really wonder. I thought the surefire method guaranteed that we'd win. I guess we run for now? The carriage had stopped near the Dolkness estate, and we were only several steps away from the garden.

“Should we run inside for now?” I asked.

“It doesn’t matter if we run—it’s all the same,” Eleanora said.

She’s right. I just stood there and looked up at the sky, when suddenly a black dot appeared.

“Something’s falling from the sky! I think it’s something separate from my left side... A person?”

It looked like it was the size of a person, and they weren’t too far, so they probably weren’t going to land right on top of us. Anyone would be able to dodge them if they just looked up.

“What do you see?” Eleanora asked.

There’s someone right here who would totally get hit. I need to carry her into the house. I moved quickly, but I’d forgotten that my left half wasn’t working. I brilliantly tripped right by Eleanora’s feet with a loud *thud*.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“It seems this is the end for me,” I said. “Don’t worry about me, Lady Eleanora. Just run.”

It’s all over. I’m going to play the part of a female lead who sacrifices herself for her best friend. I hope that Eleanora, as kind as she is, isn’t able to leave me behind and stays there as if to say it’s her turn to work hard.

Still on the ground, I looked up and saw that Eleanora hadn’t run, but was looking at me as if to say, “What are you doing?”

Okay, acting time over.

“Something is going to fall from the sky, so please evacuate the area and head inside the estate, Lady Eleanora.”

“Don’t you need to run too?”

She’s worried about me after all. Acting back on.

“I’ll be fine, just save yourself, Lady Eleanora...”

“You seem all right!” Eleanora gave me an energetic nod before she trotted away and into the estate. *Playtime is over. That’s a wrap.*

I watched Eleanora, who had put in as much effort as a grade schooler during emergency training, run off as I lay there on the ground. Patrick then slid his hands under my arms and pulled me up. The way he picked me up made me feel a bit like luggage.

“Now’s not the time to sleep. That thing is going to fall near us.”

I looked up as he instructed, and the object was headed straight for us. Now that it was closer, I knew it was the size of a person, but I still couldn’t tell who it was.

“How troublesome. What if they destroy the estate or leave a crater in the garden?”

“It’s Yumiella...”

“Don’t bring up my name just because they’re causing trouble by falling out of the sky. Don’t name the meteorite that killed the dinosaurs ‘Yumiella,’ okay? People will just judge me even more.”

I’d thought Patrick was on my side, but he started calling this act of annoyance “Yumiella.” Even if I was the only one whose reputation was being hurt by it, people might eventually think that people who are destructive are usually black-haired, and then it would be actual discrimination.

Patrick, who was in Discrimination Man’s reserve army, squinted at the falling person as he said, “That...isn’t Yumiella. It’s a black-haired person.”

He just went from being in the reserves to the main forces. He said it was a black-haired person who wasn’t me, but he was probably mistaken.

“How could that be possible? Any black-haired person falling out of the sky has to be Yumiella.”

“You seem incredibly biased towards yourself.”

If they’re falling, it’s probably me. I took another look at the falling person and saw that they had long, black hair. They had gotten closer since Patrick first noticed, so there was no mistaking it.

The one falling through the sky was Yumiella, the one floating in the sky was Yumiella, and the one standing here, me, was also Yumiella. *Wait... That’s three.*

I was Yumiella (Right Side), who could only move her right side. The one with the wings only had its left side, so it had to be Yumiella (Left Side). The person falling through the sky wasn't missing half their body, and they were frantically moving all their limbs.

What a riddle. What Yumiella isn't the left side, isn't the right side, and panics while falling through the sky?

"I think it might not be me..."

"That's what I've been saying."

Oh, in that case, should we help them? By the time that thought had crossed my mind, it was too late, and the mysterious person had crashed right in front of us into the garden of the Dolkness estate in the Royal Capital.

"Hey, Patrick? Should we have helped them?"

"Oh." That was the sound of someone who'd made an oversight. It seemed that even while knowing they weren't Yumiella, it was difficult to be worried about someone with long black hair. This discrimination towards black hair, or perhaps Yumiellas, was quite the serious issue.

I heard someone coughing in the middle of the dust cloud. It seemed they were alive. They continued to cough as if they were in pain, then I heard the voice of a man.

"Where am I? What happened?"

This is someone who survived that impact. Since we don't know who they are, we need to be on guard. We continued watching warily, and a man clad in black appeared from behind the curtain of sand.

His long hair was the same deep black as mine, and his eyes were just as dark. Though he was a man, his face even looked similar to mine. This person, dressed in armor, who could be thought of as a male Yumiella, was someone I knew.

Patrick didn't know who he was, so he spoke cautiously. "Who are you? Why did you come from the sky?"

The man seemed annoyed as he glanced over at Patrick, then he looked at

me. He stared intently as I stood there, wobbling as I couldn't maintain my balance with only having control of my right side. He then looked up at the thing in the sky with only a left side and said to himself, "I see." He nodded and continued, "This must be the world of the living. I now understand why you only had half your body over there."

My left half had died and gone to the Kingdom of Twilight. That place, where those who died with regrets gathered, was also where the first king of Valschein was. In that case, there was nothing strange about the Demon Lord being there.

I could guess that he somehow got involved with Left Yumiella's resurrection and loss of control, but I had no idea what his plans were now. Worried that we might be enemies again, I cautiously opened my mouth.

"It's been a while... Um, what should I call you? Would you prefer I use your name—"

"Demon Lord suffices."

Patrick was shocked by his response. His guard towards the mysterious person was now fully up.

"The Demon Lord?! He's *the* Demon Lord?!"

"That's right, young man. I am... I'm... Um, the way I speak isn't strange, is it?"

What's this all of a sudden? Are you okay?

Patrick froze, not understanding what was going on, so I answered in his place despite not really understanding either.

"There's nothing strange about it. You're from a different time period."

"What if I was from a time period where no one else spoke like me?"

That would mean...by current standards, right? I guess he can use strange phrasing at times, and the way he speaks is pretty rare nowadays. I pondered the changes in language that would've happened since the time the Demon Lord was from, where people surely spoke like him, and confidently declared, "It's strange. It's a little weird to speak in a manner that no one else is using."

"I see..."

The Demon Lord was saying strange things, and Patrick was completely on guard against him. *I don't care who—can one of you just act normal?* As that thought crossed my mind, Patrick spoke in his usual tone.

“You sometimes speak in a way that no one else does, Yumiella.”

Are ya tryna say I'm weird? I ignored the fact that my dear boyfriend had returned to normal because of his straight-man antics, but 'twas true that I mayst not be'st one to talketh. *I'll apologize and revise my statement.*

“The way you speak isn't strange. You're just as normal as everyone else.”

“Hmm. I see.” The Demon Lord nodded as if he were satisfied before pulling out a black notebook and scribbling something inside it. It was a very familiar notebook. *A black notebook owned by someone who was in the Kingdom of Twilight until moments ago...? No way...* I opened up the notebook I had.

“I was a little bothered by something, but Yumi-Yumi said I don't have to worry about it!”

Huh? But this notebook was probably owned by a girl, so there's no way...

The Demon lord continued writing, and words appeared in the notebook in my hands. My suspicions were confirmed.

“Yumi-Yumi said that because of the boy next to her. He seems nice. I'm a little interested in him.”

I was going to ask him why his handwriting looked like that of a girl in grade school, but there was something else I needed to say to him. I responded to the Demon Lord's cute writing with my own words.

“Um, that boy is dating Yumi-Yumi. What do you mean you're 'interested'? You better explain yourself.”

“Really?! They make such a cute couple!”

Oh. I thought he was going after Patrick, but I was totally wrong. Sorry for sending an angry text because of a misunderstanding. I should probably apologize for that in person, I thought as I looked up to see my classmate—no, the Demon Lord's face.

I was talking to the Demon Lord. This wasn't a grade school classroom, and

we weren't passing notes folded into paper airplanes.

Patrick, who had been reading our back-and-forth over paper, whispered in my ear, "I didn't know that the Demon Lord was, um...this kind of person. I've never met him before, so I didn't know."

"I didn't know either. You heard how he spoke—he speaks with flourish in a dated way."

"So which side is he on? Is he an enemy or an ally?"

The Demon Lord had probably only returned to the living world because he'd gotten caught up in my mess. Though he didn't intend to come back to life, who knew what he was planning to do now. The Ultimate Weapon still posed a threat: Left Yumiella still loomed, and it would be terrible if we had to deal with the Demon Lord on top of that.

The Demon Lord was strong. His stats would probably be similar to Patrick, and dark magic was very good at one thing: killing people. I would be able to handle him, but the Demon Lord merely existing was enough to be considered a worldwide crisis.

As Patrick and I spoke to each other, our faces close together, the Demon Lord spoke up.

"If there's something you'd like to ask me, why don't you just come out with it? If you have the ability to realize that there is something you don't want me to hear, at least do your plotting somewhere I can't see."

I guess we have no choice but to get to the point. Our crises would go up to two, but there was no point in trying to leave this issue for later.

"What is your objective here?" Patrick asked, his voice tinged with nervousness. "It may be by coincidence, but now that you're alive, what will you do here in the Royal Capital of Valschein?"

"I would've answered if you'd just asked that at the start... So how do you want me to answer?"

Uh...which is he? He doesn't seem friendly, but I feel like that could change depending on how we respond.

There was a huge difference between how he was in his notebook entries and in real life. I was still in note-passing mode, so I couldn't keep up with the Demon Lord's final-bossesque statements.

Maybe I should just ask in the notebook... I scribbled into the notebook, and the Demon Lord looked down at the notebook in his hands. After what had happened, it seemed that he'd noticed our notebooks were synced as well.

"What are you planning on doing?"

"I don't want to tell you, Yumi-Yumi. You're too busy having secret convos with your boyfriend in front of me."

"I'm sorry, Deemie. First, I totally and mistakenly thought you liked Patrick, and now I thought you were trying to overthrow the government."

"That's so mean! How could you think that?! I don't want to write to you anymore, Yumi-Yumi! Bye!"

I had cold sweats upon realizing that I effortlessly called the Demon Lord "Deemie," but I had to keep corresponding with him.

"I'm sorry! I want to keep talking. I don't have any friends who write to me, so I'm really lonely."

"Friends? Are we friends?"

"Oh, I'm sorry... We just met, so I shouldn't assume. Of course we're not friends..."

"I'm sorry too! I'm so happy you thought of me as a friend, Yumi-Yumi! I'm sorry I keep acting so nasty. I don't like Valschein that much, but I don't want to exterminate the citizens or burn the kingdom down or anything like that anymore!"

I was finally able to pull out what the Demon Lord's intentions were. *Also, I still can't believe how he speaks when writing...* It was starting to become too much, so I stopped writing in the notebook and spoke to him directly.

"I'm glad to hear that. I was worried that we'd have two world-level crises on our hands."

"Two crises... You might not be wrong about that." The Demon Lord looked

up at the black wings spread out in the sky and continued in a low voice with another disturbing statement. He completely ignored the fact that I was confused, unable to connect the person I'd just become friends with to the person standing in front of me, and he said, "I wasn't the only one who got mixed up in your half's chaos. The king of the Kingdom of Twilight has probably returned to the living world as well."

"You're referring to the hero...the first king of Valschein, right? Is he dangerous?" *So he's here too after all.* I knew he was in the Kingdom of Twilight thanks to Lemn's information, and we'd already done our research on him.

The king seemed like a much more barbaric person than we'd imagined, but he didn't seem like someone who would try to destroy the world. I couldn't say it to the Demon Lord, but the king had regretted their falling out until the day he died. The king that was awful in ways that I hadn't expected was probably not that bad of a person.

"Back in the Kingdom of Twilight, he said that Valschein is a flawed kingdom. He said that it was built upon countless sacrifices and it should've never existed in the first place."

"That's why he's a threat to the world?" I wasn't getting the full picture yet.

I was surprised that his regrets ran so deep that he was against the existence of the kingdom itself, but what did that mean for us? Patrick and I didn't understand, and the Demon Lord got to the core of the hero's intentions.

The Demon Lord spoke in a voice tinged with rage. "In other words, he's planning to destroy the Kingdom of Valschein."

I knew about the regrets the first king had at the end of his life, but trying to come back to life just to erase the kingdom he'd built was overly obsessive. *Getting rid of a kingdom? That's what a Demon Lord would do, not a hero. I can't believe the actual Demon Lord is trying to stop him... Wait.* It seemed that Patrick had the same question.

"You tried to destroy the Kingdom of Valschein in the past," Patrick said. "The reason you're telling us what's going on instead of helping the first king, who has the same objective as you, is—"

Yeah, that's right. The hero and Demon Lord should be kingdom-destroying buddies. In the notebook, he wrote that he's not going to destroy this kingdom, but I still don't know why.

I was listening to Patrick, who was saying what I was also thinking, but the Demon Lord interrupted him.

"I'm already dead. I just want to stop him from trying to change the past when he's already dead too."

It seemed for the best to not press any further. The bloodcurdling atmosphere made it clear that he truly felt that way. I didn't really want to ask for details through the notebook either—it was hard to match his energy over writing.

So the first king is trying to destroy the Kingdom of Valschein, huh? If I'd heard about this yesterday, or even this morning, I wouldn't have been able to believe it, but things were different now. I now had an idea of what sort of person he was, and I knew about the regrets he had.

Though his thinking was quite extreme, I could understand his motive. I also knew he was a violent person who might actually do what he threatened.

"We were just researching the first king," I said. "We read things like a diary written by someone close to him who struggled."

"Those close to him who struggled... There are so many people who were having a hard time that I can't tell who it would be," the Demon Lord said with a faint smile. I couldn't tell what emotion was behind that smile. The corners of his mouth quickly turned back down, and he shook his head. "There's nothing to gain from learning about his lack of regard for others."

"I guess it doesn't have much to do with stopping the destruction of the kingdom."

"That's not what I mean. After being in the Kingdom of Twilight for so long, he's completely changed. He's turned into a monster that's nothing like his true self."

Oh, that's right. That's the sort of place the Kingdom of Twilight is.

Even if Twilight didn't affect someone, obsessing over one thing for several hundred years would have an effect on their mental state. The legendary, barbaric hero was now an unrecognizable monster... Patrick and I gulped because we couldn't imagine what sort of beast he'd become.

"The hero is probably already here," the Demon Lord said as if to mock us. "I'm sure he got mixed up in your other self's mess."

"You're the only one who came falling down," I pointed out.

"No, you probably just missed him. He'll be here any moment."

The founding hero turned into a beast who's trying to destroy the Kingdom of Valschein and is coming here...?!

He suddenly arrived, his timing impeccable, as if he'd been listening to the Demon Lord's words.

There on the roof of the Dolkness estate, stood the man in question. His silky, golden hair swayed in the wind, and he stood there in his ornate military uniform, his overly decorated long sword unsheathed.

"Now is the time for us to come together," he said in a gallant voice. "As king, I will protect the world from calamity!"

Who that? The first king wasn't very kingly, but this man was somehow incredibly king-like. The king had been a man who was awful in a lot of unfortunate ways, including his intelligence, his appearance, and his behavior, but... *Who is this? Is this someone else?*

Patrick and I were confused by the appearance of an unknown person, and the regal man spoke to us with a valiant look on his face.

"At this point, there are no differences between enemies and allies. Let us let go of all constraints and work together!"

He seems so regal, but...he doesn't seem like the first king of Valschein... I looked to the Demon Lord for confirmation if that was really the first king, and he had an obvious scowl on his face.

"You. What happened to your ambitions of destroying the kingdom of Valschein?"

“Many innocent people are facing a crisis. I don’t have the time for my own plans. I want you to help as well.” With that, the king bowed deeply.

Seeing his archnemesis act so humbly made the Demon Lord scribble something into his notebook with incredible fervor.

“Save me, Yumi-Yumi! That guy’s not selfish at all! He’s so scary!”

The Demon Lord had said that the first king changed in the Kingdom of Twilight. And just as he’d said, the man had completely changed. So I couldn’t tell if this regal man actually was the king. *What a pitiful sight... Wait, is he pitiful?*

“Isn’t it all good if he’s acting normal now?” I asked the Demon Lord instead of writing back.

“It’s not! The way he’s acting... Something’s off!”

For the first time, the Demon Lord’s reactions in the notebook and in real life matched. *You hate this that much?* It was probably difficult to accept the king’s current state since he knew what the king used to be like. For me personally, it felt quite convenient. I could either have two dangerous elements or one dangerous thing plus a person who was cooperative about handling said dangerous thing. The latter was obviously preferable.

I turned to Patrick, hoping he would agree. “This is better, right?”

“If I had to choose, I guess...”

Huh? We had another member to help take down Left Yumiella, but Patrick didn’t sound too happy.

The hero nodded satisfactorily upon hearing our conversation. “I’m happy to be fighting together, Yumiella and... I don’t think I’ve heard your name.”

“I’m Patrick Ashbatten.” Patrick introduced himself to our ally, but...the hero suddenly jumped backward and put his hand on his sword.

“Ashbatten?! Wh-What did you come here for?!” As the once-confident king suddenly became flustered and confused, the Demon Lord had also distanced himself from Patrick and was now hiding behind the hero.

“Why are you using me as a shield?!” the hero exclaimed. “I may be strong,

but I'd rather avoid fighting an Ashbatten."

"You're the one who upset Ashbatten! Act like a king and take some responsibility!"

The hero and Demon Lord were pushing each other forward, trying to save only themselves. *So you guys are friends after all.*

This was quite the rare sight. It was probably the first time Patrick was the one people were afraid of when we were standing next to each other.

The two were likely afraid of his ancestor, the Lord Ashbatten from their time. There was no need to fear someone who'd died so far in the past. I wanted to explain that, but the Demon Lord seemed to realize it on his own.

"Wait... The Lord Ashbatten from our time should have already passed, no?"

"That's true! I knew I could count on you. You're my top vassal after all."

"I was surprised because you jumped to conclusions. Use your head more."

The hero's appearance was overflowing with regal dignity, but his true personality was starting to crumble that image. They were both speaking quite naturally to each other at a close distance, so maybe they had partially returned to their past selves.

Though they were terrified of his ancestor, Patrick didn't seem bothered and had begun to speak to them. *Patrick's so good at handling weirdos.*

"You said something about protecting the world from calamity, right? Our goals are the same, but depending on what method you are trying to use, we may not be able to help you."

"I understand what you're saying, but as king, I aim for what will bring the most people happiness. I'm not in a position to be picking and choosing my methods."

The hero was suddenly acting like a king again. The moment he began speaking to Patrick, the Demon Lord made an incredibly sour face, so their behavior from earlier seemed to be temporary.

The conversation between the non-black-haired members continued.

“That thing up in the sky is Yumiella. I can’t get rid of her by force.”

“Even if she’s someone important to you, it’s obvious that she’s a threat to this kingdom...”

So that’s the direction this conversation is headed in. I wasn’t as worried about myself as Patrick was, so it took a moment for me to catch up. As the hero spoke, I realized that they were debating whether they should take me down or not, but his tone suddenly changed midsentence.

“...so I shouldn’t be debating what method to use and just stop her, but...no. Then nothing will change.”

“Nothing will change?”

“That’s right. I’m a perfect king who can save all. There’s no point if I don’t make *everyone* happy. If I don’t save everyone, including the evil beings who’ve become inhuman monsters, I’ll just be repeating my mistakes...”

This is bad. I’m not sure why, but the hero is about to join Patrick’s side and defend Left Yumiella. Just like he said, she’s an evil, inhuman being, so she needs to be stopped, even if it means taking her down. But it’s okay. I, the right side, am stronger!

“We should just take her down! Since I’m the one saying it, there’s no doubt that it’s the right solution!”

“But I—”

“It’ll be fine. She might go back to normal after a quick punch.”

“I see... You may be right. There’s no guarantee that the worst-case scenario will play out. As king, I shall hold out hope and fight back until the end!”

Well said, Hero! The hero had returned to his sparkly, regal self and was fired up to defeat Left Yumiella. The only problem was Patrick. He was still firmly against my plan, and he declared his opposition to me defeating myself.

“That’s half of you! If you don’t handle this the right way, you’ll lose function in your left side forever.”

“Patrick, just think about this calmly. Which would you prefer: the me that’s here or the me that’s floating up in the sky?”

“You want me to choose...?”

Patrick looked up at my other half, which was continuing to spread its wings in the sky, then he looked back at me, who was normal other than the fact that half my body was paralyzed. He looked back at my half, who could only be described as an evil spirit descending on the planet, then at me, who looked human and communicated normally... After looking back and forth a few times, Patrick finally opened his mouth.

“You’re both Yumiella.”

“That silence was enough of an answer.”

Patrick wasn’t the type of person to get excited over giant robots or huge kaiju, so I was definitely more his type than my left half. On top of that, if he chose Left Yumiella, the world would end.

After thinking about it some more, he spoke, the words spilling out in mumbles. “Well, I don’t think you’d die that easily.”

“That’s right! Any worrying you do for my sake is a waste.” Though I’d said it myself, that fact made me a bit sad, but it was the undeniable truth. I was done persuading Patrick.

The hero then turned to the Demon Lord. “What about you? You’ll fight with us, right?”

“I’ll do what I can, just as always... Even though you’re irritating.” The Demon Lord seemed as if he would object to anything the hero suggested, but he immediately agreed. Perhaps he didn’t care that much aside from the hero’s desire to destroy Valschein.

We now had a united battlefront of four incredibly strong people. I looked at our strange group and saw Patrick grimacing as he looked up at the sky.

“What’s wrong?”

“Is she falling...?”

Huh? Falling? The moment the words left Patrick’s mouth, we all looked up at the rampaging Yumiella. *I guess it feels like she’s coming closer... Everything including her wings are so huge that it’s hard to gauge distance... Wait! She’s*

falling!

“She’s coming this way!”

I’d thought that we would have to go up to space to take her down, but I was wrong. *How smart to use her size as a misdirection. Even if she’s the weaker half, she’s still me.*

I’d been completely fooled, but we needed to go catch her as she fell from space. *Doesn’t this make dealing with her easier?*

“Isn’t this more convenient, since we don’t have to go to space?” I said without much thought. All three of my allies objected.

“Are you out of your mind?” the Demon Lord said. “Do you know how many people will die just from that thing crashing onto land?”

“I agree,” the hero said. “If any part of her touches land, it’ll be over.”

“It’ll be safer to do something about her while she’s falling,” Patrick said.

You all know that thing is me, right? Well, I guess that makes sense. I agree that the moment she lands it’s over for us. I guess we can’t just catch her and call it a day—we’ll have to launch our own attack.

My left half was making its way towards land. Perhaps it was because of her size, but she looked to be falling at a slow speed, and all I could tell was that she was higher up than the clouds dotting the sky.

It would be nice if we could do something about her while she’s at cloud height, just to be safe...

“Can anyone here fly?” I asked.

The hero and Demon Lord looked at each other with troubled looks on their faces. It appeared neither could fly, and I was regretting Ryu’s absence. Patrick, who was the only one who had a reasonable way to fly, raised his hand.

“I can fly everyone up with my wind magic. I should be able to create footing for us in midair.” A floating block of earth appeared near us.

The hero jumped lightly onto the precisely formed block of earth.

“This will suffice as footing, but it might be difficult to fight like this.”

What's that, Hero? You saying you got a problem with Pat-Pat's magic?

If we were all going to fight in midair, just relying on wind magic was going to be difficult. Patrick had flown me up with wind before, but I could only move at the caster's will—in other words, Patrick controlled my movement. The only way for each of us to actively move in midair was to jump between the floating blocks.

Though it wouldn't be flying exactly, it was the only way to do this. Before hearing the specific explanation of how to do things, the hero continued to voice his concerns.

"Doesn't creating a block of earth in a place with nothing use quite a bit of mana? You have to use wind to make it float on top of that. In that case, it would be better to just fly using wind in the first place."

No, no. We're going to use a bunch of these and hop around. Why does he think there's only going to be one block per person? It'll be faster to just show him than to explain. I jumped onto one of the footing blocks and looked at Patrick.

"There's no need for you to—"

"It's fine, it's fine."

I'd spent half a day with use of only my right side, so I'd gotten used to it. The only reason I'd tripped earlier was that I'd moved as if I was going to use my left arm and leg as well.

Though I only had use of half my body, I was Yumiella Dolkness. As long as I got used to my current state, jumping around was no big deal.

It would be a waste of time to try to convince Patrick, who was dubious about if I could do it, so I didn't wait for a response and jumped up into an empty space in the air.

Just then, several blocks of earth appeared in the air. They were appropriately spaced apart—perfect for jumping from place to place.

I landed on one with my right leg and jumped for a second time. I used my right hand to grab onto a block that was close by and used my arm strength to

turn myself and accelerate. Making use of my right arm and leg, I traveled through the air.

Finally, it was time to land. My balance wouldn't be great if I landed with only one point of contact, so I used my hand to get on all fours...or rather, on all twos? Either way, I landed on the ground.

I'd ended up getting around like a monkey, but that should've shown the hero how to get around.

"This is how you do it," I said.

"That was incredible. You were like a bug."

What? A bug?! Does he mean I was graceful like a butterfly? Or maybe a grasshopper since I was hopping around. Well, I guess there are parts of me that make me seem like a grasshopper cyborg.

"What kind of bug?"

"A cockroach."

I see. I guess people see different things when faced with something beautiful. Everyone's sensibilities are diverse, so I won't comment on his response.

The hero awkwardly averted his gaze from me and looked up at the footing blocks that were still floating. "I have to say, I'm surprised... I can't believe you're using a spell that surely burns a lot of mana this many times at once."

Well, yeah. Patrick is incredible. He can prepare footing blocks for everyone, command troops in battle, fight on the front lines, and file his taxes on the side all at the same time.

"If I'm preparing enough for everyone, I won't be able to fight in the battle myself. Do you have any questions?"

"I do!" I exclaimed. "Can you file your taxes?"

Patrick completely ignored my question, and the Demon Lord didn't say anything either. My claims had been disproved, and since no one had any questions, we were ready to go at any moment. The hero then unsheathed his sword and raised his voice, the tip of his blade pointed at the sky.

“Let us head out, then. Though I’ve swung my sword for this kingdom countless times, this is the first I’ll be doing so for the world.”

“Hmm...? Huh? For the kingdom...? You were just going on a rampage because you wanted to,” the Demon Lord said, completely confused.

We ignored the Demon Lord and began executing our plan. Perhaps it was because we didn’t have much time, but Patrick had already activated his wind magic.

In order to conserve mana, it was most efficient to be flown up to a certain height using only wind magic. My body was being lifted into the air, and we began to ascend. The way that the wind was blowing upward made me feel like I was falling through the air. It was a strange sensation.

This was a spell that required quite a bit of skill...or rather, it was something mostly used for entertainment, so there probably were only a few people who’d experienced this before. Despite the rarity of this experience, the hero and Demon Lord, of course, didn’t seem surprised at all.

The Demon Lord’s expression normally didn’t change, so his surprise was all internal. I looked at him and saw he was mumbling something.

“Even if you’ve tidied up your appearance and now act all classy, you’re just as aggressive as always...”

Deemie, could it be that you have a crush on Hero? I kept that thought to myself. I knew it would play out as an embarrassed grade school girl objection and lead to an annoying mess.

Finally, we were getting closer to the rampaging Left Yumiella. Our party facing this world-ending crisis was four people: the hero, the Demon Lord, the hidden boss...and Patrick.

“It feels like you just got mixed up in our thing,” I said to Patrick.

“That *is* what’s happening.” He spoke as if he were the only victim here, but I was in the same boat—I’d gotten mixed up in the fated connection between the hero and the Demon Lord. *I’m a victim too! Oh, but they came to the living world because of Left Yumiella...*

I was going to stop looking at things in such a black-and-white manner, like victims and perpetrators. Nothing was so clear-cut in this world. The only thing I knew for sure was that at this rate, Left Yumiella was a big enough danger that she could bring an end to this world, and she was definitely evil! *I'm really starting to look like a perpetrator here. Negative thoughts are no good—let me think positively.*

“Is that really me? I’m not that evil-looking, am I?”

“Stop trying to deny reality. It’s too late for that.”

Just as Patrick delivered that stinging line, the unidentified flying object that probably had no relation to me made a move. Trying to be cautious, Patrick paused our ascension and kept us floating in midair.

Several panel-like objects shot out of Left Yumiella’s back. There were a total of...twelve. They were about thirty centimeters in length, and... *Oh, they’re making a boxy U shape! They’re clanging around and changing like a robot!*

The panels were separate from the main body, but they were flying around in the air as if they had their own minds. *I feel like I’ve seen this before somewhere.*

“I’m sorry, Patrick. That thing is definitely me.”

From the looks of it, the objects were likely made out of magical energy, so making them change form was only a waste of time. Left Yumiella could’ve just made them in the U shape in the first place. Since she had copied something from an anime, there was a ninety-nine percent chance she was me. There was probably a one percent chance that she was a different person and a genius who could come up with something that was so obviously cool.

Patrick seemed confused by my sudden change in attitude.

“Why are you admitting it now?”

“I thought it was very like me to go out of her way to make things look cool.”

“Do they look cool...? They kind of look like tweezers.” Patrick didn’t understand, and he tilted his head. That was the moment I became one hundred percent sure it was me. “Do you know what they’re going to do?”

“I think they’re going to fly around like drones, or bring out a particle cannon, or three might combine to become a force field...”

“Drone...?”

Since the panels were shaped like the fins on a fish, I was going to refer to them as fins moving forward. As I explained my thoughts to Patrick, Left Yumiella continued to manipulate the fins and fall towards land, ready to destroy the planet.

The first to make a move was the hero. He jumped forward, and all of the fins rushed towards him. Ignoring gravity and aerodynamics, the twelve units each independently followed a complicated path. Not only did they surround him on all sides, but they trapped him from the top and bottom as well. *That’s what you get for making a move on your own...*

This formation meant that the fins were probably going to shoot out a beam. I needed to save him, or the hero was going to be in a pickle. I was about to step forward, but the Demon Lord held his hand out and stopped me.

“There’s no need to join in.”

It would be impossible to dodge an attack like that coming from all directions. I would probably try to take as little damage as I could, but I would still move under the assumption that I was going to get hit. *That’s because I can fight like a zombie, taking advantage of my endurance and recovery... The hero might lose his life to a single hit.*

As the Demon Lord stopped me, magical energy radiated out of every fin. They were probably preparing for an attack. From the amount of magical energy pouring out, I was sure that the hero was going to be killed with a single hit.

I’ve just been watching because his former partner said to, but I need to help him. I tried to join in again, but this time the hero stopped me. The man was surrounded by an attack that was going to kill him instantly, but he looked me in the eye and nodded, signaling that he was fine.

Finally, dark red rays of light shot out from each of the fins. Before the first

shots reached the hero, the twelve fins changed positions and angles, launching a second attack. They adjusted their position for a third time before shooting the beams once more.

“Is that really you?!” Patrick exclaimed in surprise. “She’s attacking so skillfully.”

It seemed that even Patrick was shocked by her attack method. *I’m pretty sure my left side is just copying what we’ve seen in anime.*

There was no way the hero could dodge these attacks. At this rate, the hero was going to die...or rather, he was probably already dead.

The moment the attacks were going to land, the hero spun around in midair. He then jumped off the landing, which had been destroyed by the rays, and resumed ascending.

“Huh...? He dodged them? All of them?”

“He should be able to do that much at the very least,” the Demon Lord said, nodding as if this were expected.

No way. That’s impossible. He was shot with thirty-six beams coming from every direction. There wasn’t a single spot that was safe because of the delay in some of the attacks. The hero had probably moved around in the space, which was changing every millisecond, with needlelike precision.

It seemed that the hero’s abilities were unexpected for Left Yumiella as well, because she didn’t continue to attack. *The way she has no follow-through is so me.*

The hero jumped around the footing blocks Patrick made. He seemed to be going after the fins first. He closed in on one of the fins.

The targeted fin shot countless beams at him, but there was no way they were going to hit the hero after everything else he’d dodged. The other fins tried to help, but there was no point.

“Let’s start with one,” he mumbled. All I saw was his overly decorated sword glimmer.

Oh, so that’s a light-type holy sword. As he skillfully wielded the weapon

fitting of a hero, he destroyed one of the fins with ease.

The king had incredible physical ability; a brilliant field of vision; an incredible battle sense; and a powerful, light-type sword attack... The hero was unbelievably strong against the element of darkness, as I'd expected. His abilities surpassed the original hero party in *LMH*. He could probably overpower the Demon Lord in a one-on-one battle.

The remaining fins continued to gather then scatter, changing their movements, toying with the hero. But such cheap tricks wouldn't work on the hero.

The number he mumbled continued to go up, and eventually he had taken down all of the fins. He did it so masterfully that the thought of helping never crossed my mind. *He took down all twelve of the fins?! That didn't even take three minutes.*

Even after destroying the companions, the hero kept going. Next was Left Yumiella herself. Perhaps it was because her moving parts were huge due to the size of her wings, but her movements seemed to be slow. With no time to attack the predator back, Left Yumiella could only—

“She blocked it.”

The tip of the holy sword's blade stopped right in front of Left Yumiella. It seemed there was a force field around her. The force field could be described as a square pyramid around her. *So you're going to put up a force field around yourself?*

The hero's attack had pierced the force field, but its strength was diminished to the point that he couldn't move close enough to land the attack on Left Yumiella.

The tear in the force field immediately began repairing itself. The hero moved quickly, jumping backward before his sword could get stuck. He descended and created some distance between them.

The force field reminded me of the light barrier that Eleanora's father had stolen from the church. *I've struggled against a barrier too.*

Because the barrier blocked the holy sword's attack and repaired itself

quickly, there were limited options as to how to take Left Yumiella down. *We might just have to carve out that entire space...*

“I think I have to deal with—”

“One more time!”

I thought it was finally my time to shine, but the hero didn’t wait for me and launched an attack once more. The force field repaired itself quickly, so it was dangerous. Even if he was able to pierce through it, he would have to get inside it before it closed up. I myself had my arm sliced off by the aforementioned barrier.

The hero didn’t look back. He faced forward and accelerated, using the footing blocks all around him. Even upon reaching the force field, he kept going, but it didn’t look like he had a way of dealing with it. At this rate, he was going to crash into the force field.

You’re going to get hurt. There’s nothing I can do for you, you know?

“*Black Hole.*” A black orb appeared, ignoring the force field’s flat surface.

It was the very spell I’d thought of to deal with this situation—*Black Hole*, one of the highest-class dark magic spells. The only ones who could use this spell were the hidden boss, Yumiella Dolkness, and...

The hero’s gaze was still facing forward as he spoke to the others. “I believed in you. I knew you would follow my lead.”

“Do you know how many times I’ve had to go along with your reckless behavior?” the Demon Lord huffed, unimpressed. He had followed him at some point.

The hero then aimed for the very short period after *Black Hole* disappeared before the force field repaired itself.

“This isn’t just my own strength. This is an attack from the best vassal ever *and myself.*”

The hero and Demon Lord were perfectly in sync, and they finally reached Left Yumiella. The holy sword began shining as if to respond to their coordination. The Demon Lord was shadowing the hero, which made him seem to sparkle

even more.

Wow, the hero is incredible. The man had even gotten darkness on his side, and his light could possibly defeat Yumiella Dolkness.



The hero's final blow most definitely landed. The attack landed, then...

"She's uninjured...?"

Left Yumiella didn't react at all. She didn't have to because she didn't have a single scratch on her, even after directly being hit.

The hero was undoubtedly strong, but it was also true that Left Yumiella had used nowhere near her full strength.

"I guess we were just being played with," the hero said, mocking himself.

I'm sorry. I really think she was just playing—not in the sense that she was making fun of you, but I think she was genuinely having fun. You were going along with a child's games.

I felt bad. The hero was definitely strong, but Left Yumiella didn't think of him as a threat in the slightest. No matter how many times he dodged her attacks, if she really felt he was a threat, she could just destroy an entire area that was too large for him to flee from. Even if she only had half her strength, it was possible.

Still, there was a point to the hero's attacks. Though she viewed him as beneath her, Left Yumiella was still paying attention to the hero.

After the hero's attack didn't work, there was only one person who could handle her—someone with equal—no, far more strength than her. The hero had bought time for the strongest being in the world to get above Left Yumiella.

The hero looked up from the gaps between the black wings, and I looked down. Our eyes met.

"Please save the world," he said.

I used the time the hero had bought for me to take a detour, and I was right above Left Yumiella now. I had the advantage now. The hero, who'd made that possible, put his hopes on me, but I couldn't care less about the world right now.

"I'm stronger! The right side is stronger!"

This is the battle of Yumiellas—the left versus the right—and I'm going to win!

Chapter 9: The Hidden Boss (Unknown) Sees the Two Off

My right side had won—in other words, the left side, which had gone to the Kingdom of Twilight had emerged victorious. *Huh...? I'm the right side, so I've been alive this whole time. I'm the side that gathered information in the palace basement, met the hero, and sent the middle-aged catboy and his brother into the afterlife, which means I'm the left side who went to Twilight... Wait.*

I had won the battle of Left Yumiella versus Right Yumiella, but was I the right side or the left? I crossed my arms and went through my memories. I had woken up this morning to find only the right half of my body working, which meant I was definitely the right side, but I realized I only possessed the left half of my body in the kingdom of Twilight, so I had to be the left side.

Hm...? Why can't I figure this out? All I'm trying to do is figure out what I was doing a few hours ago. Speaking of what I was doing... Where am I?

My mind was so fuzzy that I wasn't conscious of where I was. I quickly scanned my surroundings and realized I was in Patrick's arms. The afternoon sun was shining bright in the western sky, and we were falling through the air while he carried me bridal style.

Oh, Patrick's here. Short time no see.

"I thought I was actually dead... I was so worried I'd never see you again."

"Are you Left Yumiella...?"

"No, I'm the right side. We've been together since this morning, remember? I'm so glad I got to see you one more time."

"So which side are you?"

It's Patrick! I thought I'd never see him again since I died! He wasn't there when I woke up, and it's still the afternoon, so it's been less than a day. Even though we were only apart for a short while, I'm so glad to see him again, I

thought as I wrapped my arms around him. As I squeezed him with both arms, I truly felt like we were together again, and... *Wait. Both arms?*

“Both my arms are working! How are they working?”

“While your two sides were fighting, you started absorbing each other and eventually turned back into one person,” Patrick explained since I was completely lost.

It seemed that through some sort of fusion or incorporation, my two halves had turned back into one. *So that’s why both halves of my body work.*

I was starting to get embarrassed, so I stopped hugging Patrick, at which point he gave me a serious look.

“I’m glad that you’re back to normal, but...which side’s memories do you have?”

“I have both my left and right sides’ memories... I think that’s why I keep saying weird things.”

My thoughts and words had been jumping back and forth between two realities, probably because my two sets of memories had caused some confusion. Both the side that had met the hero and the Demon Lord in the Kingdom of Twilight and the side that had gathered information on the hero to launch an attack were me. Both sets of memories and personalities were mine.

I started going through my two sets of memories and looking back on this whole incident... I had caused a lot of trouble for those around me. My left side was at fault for growing wings and losing control, but from her perspective, it was all my right side’s fault. The world was in trouble for a bit because of the largest-scale battle of left versus right that this world had seen. Though I was embarrassed by my actions, I was now back in one piece.

“I’m sorry for all the trouble—”

“I’m glad you’re back,” Patrick said, interrupting my apology with an unexpected statement. “You must’ve been scared all on your own.”

This isn’t some touching reunion, you know? From Patrick’s perspective, I never left, and the same goes for half of me.

“We’ve been together since this morning.”

“But you’re also the Yumiella I haven’t seen in a bit, right?”

“That’s true, but there’s no need to voice that—” I felt something strange on my left cheek. Touching it with my right hand, I found it was wet. Tears were dripping out of just my left eye. “Thank you... I’m home, Patrick.”



With Patrick still holding me, we made our way back to the ground. The threat in the skies had disappeared, and the chaos in the Royal Capital was settling down.

I stood on my own two feet for the first time in a while as I asked Patrick the question on my mind. “From the way you described it, it sounds like my two sides were battling a bit before fusing back into one... What was the fight like?”

“You weren’t fighting for that long, so I don’t really remember.”

Would he really forget the moment that Left Yumiella and Right Yumiella clashed? I was going to push Patrick to spill whatever he was hiding, but the hero landed near us and called out to me.

“Thank you for saving the world. The way you fought was quite the sight to see.”

“Thanks to you, my two sides seem to have come back together.”

I’d just thrown myself into the battle to prove I was strong, and a version of me was the very threat we were fighting... I didn’t feel right being thanked for saving the world.

I’d tried to be humble in my response, but if this conversation kept going, I would just sound hypocritical, so I tried to avoid discussing the world.

“I’m glad to hear that,” the hero said.

“By the way, how would you describe the way I fought?”

“You were vicious in a way that is unbelievable for a human to be.”

“You’re talking about my out-of-control left side, right?”

“Both sides.”

I see. Our battle must've been so intense that Patrick didn't want to say anything. I feel like it wasn't a cool, graceful battle, but more of a cosmic-horror bloodbath to the death, so I won't ask for details.

Because I set aside my curiosity things were, for now, settled. Just looking at the end result, things were back to normal, so you could say we had a happily ever after. Everyone seemed to be quite relaxed.

“So the threat against this world is gone. It's time for me to fulfill my objective.”

I knew what that objective was very well. Now that my two sides had merged, I could see all the details.

The hero—the first king of the Kingdom of Valschein—was a brash person who was often mistaken for a barbarian. His nature led him to impulsively start up a kingdom, but towards the end of his life, he was full of regrets.

The hero had had a falling out with the Demon Lord, and his younger brother had become a duke only to become an enemy of the royal family for the kingdom's sake... The Kingdom of Valschein was a kingdom that was built upon countless sacrifices. He felt it was a mistake of a kingdom and that, with his own hands, he had to...

“Are you planning to destroy the Kingdom of Valschein?”

The hero responded with a hearty nod. “I still want the same thing. I was miraculously brought back to life, so I can't leave this mistake of a kingdom as is.”

“So you'll get rid of Valschein... Then what? Are you going to rebuild this kingdom as its king?”

“Once the kingdom is gone, the future should be determined by the people living here.”

So you're going to destroy their kingdom, and then the rest is up to them?

The hero's objective was quite strange. The act itself of destroying Valschein sounded quite malicious, but he didn't want to kill the citizens of this kingdom, nor did he want to take over this land. He just wanted to destroy the framework

which this kingdom was built upon, and he had no desires past that.

That seems kind of unnecessary, no?

“As you can see, the Kingdom of Valschein is prosperous and peaceful.”

“Still, that doesn’t change the fact that the way this kingdom came to be was wrong.”

I’m aware that the founding of this kingdom was kind of suspicious. But isn’t that just how kingdoms are? Not that I’d say that out loud—it would be like I’m trying to complain about all the different legends about how other kingdoms came to be. I don’t think the hero is going to respond to that sort of rhetoric either.

Perhaps if someone who knew him well spoke to him that could get through to the hero. The very man who was the perfect candidate to stop the hero appeared, landing near us, albeit a bit late to the conversation.

“Affirmative. All kings do are make mistakes.” The Demon Lord, who was a valuable member of the team to convince the hero to stop, had ended up validating his statement.

No way. He should be the most against all of this. I kept my mouth shut and waited for the Demon Lord to continue.

“Kings have always made mistakes, and they’ll continue to make mistakes in the future.”

It was at this point that I knew for a fact that the Demon Lord would never approve of the hero’s actions, but the hero wasn’t backing down. An argument between the two began.

“I changed while I was in the Kingdom of Twilight. I have the qualities of both a hero who takes down enemies and a king who rules over a land.”

“You haven’t changed! All that’s different is that your appearance and demeanor are now sickening. Your true nature hasn’t changed in the slightest.”

“What about me is—?”

“When we broke through the barrier in the sky, you just ran towards it! I was the one who made sure my *Black Hole* was timed perfectly.” The Demon Lord

trembled with anger as he piled on his objections. If this were an actual debate, he'd be breaking the rules, but what he said was true, so the hero couldn't object too fiercely.

"That was because I believed you would—"

"If you had any intention of fighting together, why didn't you say something or even just shoot me a glance? You always keep running forward without ever looking back."

"That is one of my faults... I'll do my best to fix it."

That seemed to be one aspect of the hero's true nature that had remained the same, despite his centuries of change. The Demon Lord was probably going to tell him that he wouldn't be able to fix it, but that assumption of mine was proved wrong. The Demon Lord responded with something completely separate from the issue of whether the hero could fix this flaw.

"Don't fix it! Don't you dare ever fix it! You stay that way!"

After supporting the hero's reckless attack and even complaining about his actions, the Demon Lord had clearly told him not to fix his behavior. He continued repeating his statement, not telling the hero that he couldn't fix this flaw, but rather commanding him not to.

The hero had probably caused a lot of trouble for the Demon Lord, which should've made him want the hero to fix his flaw, but the Demon Lord let his feelings out and yelled, telling the hero to stay the same.

Patrick and I were completely stunned, and the hero seemed taken aback as well. The Demon Lord took a moment to catch his breath before continuing, his voice now calm.

"Why don't you understand?! In your current state, founding a kingdom would be an out-of-reach fantasy."

"I would be able to handle things much better the way I am now."

"That's not possible. No matter how proper you try to act, you wouldn't be able to even handle a tiny kingdom."

"As long as the king is proper, then his people will follow!"

Right now, I felt that the hero was winning the argument. When he was alive, before he'd changed, he was clearly not fit to be king. He was a skilled fighter, but everyone would have agreed that he was destructively terrible when it came to political matters.

The Demon Lord shook his head repeatedly at the hero, whose eyes glimmered like a king who was ready to lead his people. "No way. It can't be done. It's impossible. We followed you with everything we had precisely because you were a man of many mistakes. When the land was filled with battle after battle, we were all able to dream of a new kingdom because you were a violent and selfish idiot who followed his own path."

I was starting to understand the Demon Lord's point. If the hero was going to rule over Valschein in its current state, the hero (King) was definitely a better fit. The hero (barbarian) would've been abandoned by both the aristocrats and his people.

But things were different now. The man best fit to lead a kingdom in a time where many small nations were warring wouldn't be the hero (King) who could be seen as weak but the violently energetic hero (barbarian).

It wasn't that the hero had become a king despite his barbaric nature—he had become the king *because* of his barbaric nature. The hero was starting to understand where the Demon Lord was going as well. He closed his eyes and became lost in thought.

"That may be true," he said. "But does that mean I should accept Valschein as it currently is? You know very well how many sacrifices this kingdom was built upon."

"Who was sacrificed? The aides who were given all the troublesome jobs?"

The hero seemed to have difficulty responding to the Demon Lord's mean-spirited question, but he continued. "You were sacrificed for the kingdom's sake, no?"

"It's only natural to take down a swarm of monsters."

"Do you mean that you forgive—?"

"Don't get it twisted. I'm going to continue resenting you for stealing her

away from me.”

Man, stalkers have such a scary way of thinking. The hero is definitely not guilty when it comes to the queen.

With how the conversation was going, the hero couldn't just say, “She never had feelings for you in the first place,” so his face tensed up.

Things were getting off topic, and the Demon Lord was starting to get tired of this whole thing. How was the hero going to deal with this? After a moment of silence, the hero finally opened his mouth.

“My younger brother was also sacrificed.”

Oh, he changed the topic. The hero set aside matters relating to the Demon Lord and began speaking of the role the Hillrose family had to carry out.

“He intentionally opposed the royal family for the kingdom's sake. This curse is surely continuing to torture the Hillroses.”

Um, well, you're not wrong, but... It was true that the Hillroses knew they were doomed, and there were probably many struggles that came with that, but the duchy was now...

“It's bright outside now! Are you all right, Yumiella?!”

If it had been anyone else, I would assume that they had been eavesdropping and waiting for the right moment to appear. But it was Eleanora, and she just had great timing.

Once she stepped outside, Eleanora took notice of the hero and the Demon Lord. The daughter of the former Duke of Hillrose wasn't shy around strangers, and she energetically greeted them.

“It's nice to meet you. I'm Eleanora!”

“O-Oh, nice to meet you, Eleanora,” the hero responded, but he was troubled by the appearance of the cheerful noble lady. The Demon Lord just ignored her, or perhaps he didn't think she was greeting him as well. *I feel like it's the latter, and that's making me sad.*

Though Eleanora's appearance had thrown him off a bit, the hero got right back to it. He gestured towards her using his hand. “I can tell that she's a good

person and that she was raised with love. If she had been born into the Hillrose family, she wouldn't have had the chance to grow up to be such a person."

She totally would've. She grew up in that very family, spoiled, and turned into this innocent and pampered noble lady.

The hero's attempt to use the lady that barged in to prove his point completely backfired.

"She's the daughter of the Duke of Hillrose," I said.

"Huh?"

"Oh, she's not a Hillrose anymore, though."

"What?"

"The Hillroses carried out their duty about six months ago, leading to the fall of the household. Her father, the last Duke of Hillrose, is now living out his days having fun. The same goes for his daughter, as you can see..."

Before I knew it, Eleanora was standing in front of the Demon Lord. The Demon Lord was a naturally unapproachable man, and on top of that, his aura was practically screaming, "Don't talk to me." Despite all of that, Eleanora didn't seem timid.

"Your black hair is lovely! I'm Eleanora. What's your name? Where did you come from? Is it a coincidence that you have similar hair to Yumiella?"

"Yes..." After all of Eleanora's pushing, the Demon Lord was able to respond to just her last question. *Let him write his responses. Actually, no—he's creepy through text, so don't do that. Just leave him alone.*

The hero stared at Eleanora, who was the personification of innocence, stunned as she continued to try and get through to the Demon Lord.

"Is that so...? She's a descendant of my brother...? I guess things can change quite a bit with the passage of time."

"That's right. We're living in a period where the only daughter of the duke could grow up to be a girl like that."

The duke had hid Ronald's identity and left him with the royal family, and he

had planned to be the last Hillrose to fulfill the family's role. Eleanora had probably grown up with many freedoms partially due to those surrounding circumstances, but there was no need to bring that up.

After hearing my explanation, which did leave some room to misinterpret the facts, the hero slowly nodded several times. He then seemed to suddenly realize something.

"Has the royal family of Valschein changed as well?"

"The king is a proper leader. I don't know how skilled he is in battle, but I think he does a wonderful job at running this kingdom."

I wouldn't admit this out loud, but I'd never thought of the current king as a particularly extraordinary leader, but he did do everything he needed to... In other words, I thought he was someone who could be trusted. *I don't like that my feelings about the king seem kind of condescending... Still, that's how I feel.*

I trusted that our current king would satisfactorily fulfill his duties. If the king had been a strange person, like a grown-up version of how Prince Edwin was back when he was a student, I probably would've fled from Valschein before I got to know Patrick.

Though I'd shown plenty of evidence that the kingdom was currently doing well, the hero still didn't seem satisfied. It didn't seem like a logical issue, but rather an emotional one.

"Still, even if the kingdom is doing well now, its foundation is no good. As the king, I—"

The moment she heard the word "king," Eleanora, who'd been trying to one-sidedly pursue a conversation with the Demon Lord, reacted. She stared at the hero in shock. "You're a king?! I couldn't tell at all!"

"Are you saying that I don't look like a king?!"

I thought he looked like a king and nothing else, but I guess Eleanora had a different impression...

The hero seemed quite shocked, since he, too, appeared to think that he looked regal. My opinion was based on how he was dressed, his hair, and his

behavior, but Eleanora was someone who didn't let such things color her thoughts, so I was curious about her opinion.

"If you don't mind, could you tell me what parts of me make me seem like I'm not a king?"

"A king is someone who must tolerate all things, both the good and bad. There are people who have chosen not to become the king because they understood they were incapable of that."

I see. It makes sense for someone who had a dad that was the worst of the worst in this kingdom to think that way.

Following what Eleanora said, our current king was a man who would probably choose to sacrifice someone if it was necessary for the kingdom. People who couldn't do that—in other words people like the hero, or the person who Eleanora brought up as an example despite her point not needing any additional clarification, or someone who could only tolerate the good—would all have a difficult time being the king.

The hero seemed to be curious as to who had stepped back from being king. *You shouldn't ask. It's going to be a long story.*

"That man who gave up becoming the king, what path did he choose?"

Oh no, he's done it. He asked about the second prince. This is going to be long.

"He believed in his own sense of justice and decided to press forward... In other words, he chose the path of being a hero. He does take some wrong turns sometimes, but I believe it's just the other side of the coin of his goodness. You could say that he can be quite self-righteous, but I think that's why he can save many people as well. When the negative sides of his personality come up, he'll be fine as long as he has allies to help stop him!" Eleanora spoke with a beaming smile.



When it came to Prince Edwin and perfume, Eleanora suddenly became incredibly sharp. I wouldn't have been surprised if Eleanora's mind was sharper than Patrick's or mine when it came to matters related to those two things.

The hero was completely taken aback by the transformation he'd seen the airheaded noble lady go through, and he slumped his shoulders in defeat.

"That's right. I've continued to move forward without ever looking back. I thought that I wouldn't be able to create a proper legacy behaving like that, but there were plenty of people around me who made up for my faults. You were one of those people too." The hero turned to look at the Demon Lord.

Eleanora of all people had succeeded in talking down the hero. The Demon Lord, who should've been happiest about this, responded as if he didn't care.

"Make up for your faults? You make it sound so formal. What we did was no different than cleaning up after a brat."

"Who are ya callin' a brat? You're one to be talkin' when you could barely keep up with me."

Huh? What? Who the heck just spoke after the Demon Lord?!

The Demon Lord and Eleanora didn't seem to be surprised, so I turned to Patrick, who also seemed confused. *Right? Some brash person just barged into our conversation, right?* Patrick and I appeared to be the only ones who were surprised.

The Demon Lord continued to speak like nothing was wrong. He seemed to be in a natural state, as if he'd spoken to this person countless times before—as if this was how things were supposed to be.

"Do you know how much the rest of us struggle because of your selfish actions?"

"I didn't ask for anyone's help. I ain't thankin' anyone for stuff they did on their own."

"I can't stand you."

Um...are things settled now? It took so long to get here...

Before I knew it, the sun had nearly set and the day was coming to an end.

It was now twilight, and the Demon Lord began walking towards the west, his back facing us. The hero immediately ran after him and caught up. The two were backlit by the remaining light.

Wait... I rubbed my eyes and squinted once more at the hero's back. The hero now had a pelt that was far from classy wrapped around his neck, and he was dressed in clothing that looked comfortable but quite disheveled. He had a machete-like sword that was best for hacking and slashing hanging from his hip.

"Hey, don't walk ahead of me! Where you goin'?"

"Don't follow me."

"Fine, I'm leavin' ya in the dust, then!"

"Hm...? Wait, hold on! That face of yours...?!"

The hero had passed the Demon Lord, walking ahead of him without looking back. They continued walking towards the red horizon.

"I always thought it was a sunrise... I guess that red sky really was a sunset. The sun wasn't risin'. It only set."

"Of course it was a sunset. You spent plenty of days running around. It's only natural to retire to bed at night."

"I'm glad I got to walk with ya in the end. Things weren't so bad back then, were they?"

The hero never looked back, and he continued to head in the direction of the sun, the Demon Lord following behind. Gradually, the twilight sky grew darker. The two had kept walking in the sunlight, but night was coming soon.

"See ya! Sorry for all the trouble!"

With those last words, the hero and Demon Lord's bodies began to crumble. Their flesh disintegrated into sand, just like when the residents of the Kingdom of Twilight were satisfied, and eventually, there was nothing left of them.

I was glad that we had this time after the sun had set.

Thanks to this ambiguous time of day, twilight, the hero and the Demon Lord

were able to share one last stroll.

It was now night. The remaining light peeking over the western horizon was gone, and the day had ended.

Epilogue

One week had passed since all the commotion caused by my splitting in half. We had returned to Dolkness County, and things had settled down. I wasn't sure if saying they were now at peace was quite correct, but the hero and the Demon Lord had disappeared, and I had both sides of my body back.

The side of me that had died felt that coming back to life would be bad, but that was a conclusion I had come to when I didn't know that only half of me had died and things had gotten a bit jumbled after my losing control and whatnot.

My wedding, another event where I had a bad feeling would bring some kind of trouble, was coming up, so I was really glad that this situation was wrapped up in a day.

Still, the battle between my left and right sides had seemed to take quite the toll on me. I was feeling the exhaustion of both sides at once, so I hadn't been able to do much for the past week.

I'd recovered quite a bit now, so I wanted to return to my usual work starting tomorrow, and I was discussing that with Patrick.

"I'm fine now. It was less of a physical toll and more a mental one from having two sets of memories in my head."

"Your left side met with the hero and the Demon Lord early on, right?"

"Well, I met with other people before the Demon Lord, like a calico cat that wasn't afraid of me."

"Was it actually a cat?"

How sharp of you to notice, Pat-Pat. That calico was a middle-aged man. I think I'll wait to tell him about the cat brothers, though. I feel like the load of remembering the shocking image of the cat-eared man combined with trying to get him to believe me will be exhausting.

Since the brothers were reunited in the Kingdom of Twilight, the younger

brother had the chance to reveal the truth about his made-up travel logs, and I felt that they had a nice ending. As for the hero and the Demon Lord...

“Do you think it was good that they reunited after death?”

“It was probably good since they were able to get rid of the regrets they had.”

“That’s true...”

Seeing the hero and the Demon Lord disappear into the sun together, it was hard to imagine that they had once hated each other. The hero had spent centuries in Twilight, while the Demon Lord spent that time sealed away. It had taken quite a while, but at the end, they were friends...or at the very least, they’d returned to their previous relationship.

As I imagined what the hero’s face had looked like when he’d returned to his barbarian form, since I hadn’t been able to catch a single glimpse of it, Patrick mumbled something as if overcome with emotion.

“I never expected there to be an afterlife.”

“Just like Lemn explained, I’m not really sure what the point of that place is, though.”

The reason the Kingdom of Twilight existed was unclear. Unless someone was an exception like me, no one there would be coming back to life. It could be hellish for someone to just spend their time there, continuing to hold their regrets from when they were alive.

Still, I’d seen people who seemed to be saved by the Kingdom of Twilight, so I questioned its existence, but I couldn’t reject it.

“I’d like to hear what happened there one day,” Patrick said.

“Yeah... I’ll tell you about the cat-eared man when I have the energy for it.”

“That sounds like an exhausting story.”

“I don’t think I’d be able to endure telling it while I’m feeling down.”

Since he’d just said he wanted to hear about it, Patrick grimaced, realizing he couldn’t take it back. *Should I just tell him now? I have the story about the brothers who wanted to be cats or the story about the woman who swapped*

reality with paintings and turned into actual abstract art.

Patrick sensed something bad coming, so he changed the subject. “You’ve caused various commotions in the past, but I can’t believe your left and right halves split.”

“Would you have been able to believe it if it was my top and bottom halves?”

“Top and bottom...?”

Maybe I should try to split into two horizontally next. I feel like I’ll be able to keep one half from dying. If I say I’m going to do it, Patrick will probably try to stop me, so I’ll keep it to myself.

Speaking of, I haven’t told Eleanora about the cat-eared man—I mean, the unfortunate perfumer, Quartus. I told Patrick I would be off and headed to see Eleanora.

“Lady Eleanora!”

Eleanora was in her room. As soon as she saw me, Eleanora handed me something I’d never seen before. *What is this...?* There was a string with a heavy, metal button on the end of it. Eleanora held up the string and began swinging it like a pendulum.

“Yumiella, you are getting sleepy, very sleepy...”

“I’m not.”

She was trying to hypnotize me, and the metal button was being used like a five-yen coin, which Japanese kids used to do the same thing. This kingdom didn’t have any coins with holes in them like Japan, so that was probably why she’d used the button.

I didn’t know that this world had a similar form of hypnosis as what I’d seen in my past life. *I wonder where Eleanora gets her information from... Also, I would never get hypnotized by something like this. You hypnotize someone by whispering a countdown in their ear. Oh, but if Eleanora were to whisper into my ear, I feel like she’d scream out of nowhere and burst my eardrums. That sounds terrifying...*

As such silly thoughts ran through my mind, Eleanora continued her silly hypnosis.

“You are getting sleepy, very sleepy...”

“Like I said, I’m not.”

“Maybe you’re someone who’s resistant to this. I’ll try it on someone else.”

The only people this sort of thing works on are gullible and a little stupid. But there isn’t anyone who fits that description around us.

Anyway, time for the main topic. I’m sure Eleanora isn’t seriously trying to learn hypnosis either. She’s just bored.

“Do you remember the scent of the black notebook you found in the forbidden archives?”

“Of course! I have no doubt that it was a fragrance made by Sir Quartus! It smelled like a sad dessert at sunset where the residents spent their time peacefully—like a gentle afterlife.”

How terrifying. Eleanora doesn’t know what the Kingdom of Twilight looks like nor did she hear the cat-eared man’s description of the scent. How did she get it so accurately just by smelling it? She really is incredible, even if she’s trying to do some idiotic hypnosis.

Since Eleanora was a huge fan of Sir Quartus, it was a bit difficult to say that I’d met him. Not only that, but the perfumer she admired was a middle-aged man with cat ears sprouting from his head. I agonized over what I should tell her while she continued speaking about the fragrance.

“Also, that was a true scent. I believe that Sir Quartus was in that desert during sunset, and he might’ve not known it, but his younger brother was probably nearby too... I hope they can travel the world together in the end.”

“Terrifying...” I’d meant to keep that in my thoughts, but it had accidentally slipped out.

How? How do you know about the calico brother too? Did she peak into my memories using her hypnosis?

It was Eleanora who had been able to talk the hero down thanks to her love

for Edwin, and we were able to establish communication between the living world and the Kingdom of Twilight because Eleanora had found the Demon Lord's notebook. Perhaps Eleanora was the MVP of this whole incident.

There were several other things I had realized thanks to my two sets of memories coming together. One of those was that the first king had made the mummified mermaid in the basement of the Royal Palace.

The biggest discovery was the Demon Lord's notebook. The notebook had followed the Demon Lord into the Kingdom of Twilight like an item he'd had equipped. And the one that had been stored for many years after the Demon Lord was sealed away had synced up. The syncing was probably caused by the Demon Lord spraying a fragrance on his notebook. The notebook, of which two copies existed between the living world and the Kingdom of Twilight, had been linked through Quartus's perfume.

I feel like Lemn also said something about how smells are the only thing that can travel between the worlds.

"Do you know why smells are the only thing that can travel between here and Twilight, Eleanora?"

"That's an easy question to answer." *What?* I'd thought it was a bit of a mystery, and it couldn't be explained through science, so I was surprised when Eleanora responded so quickly.

I guess Eleanora has some insane understanding when it comes to perfume, so maybe her brain is in hyperdrive. I'm really curious as to why smells are so special! I held my breath and waited for her to continue.

"Because...fragrances are the most memorable thing to people."

"I see." Her response turned out to be some fluffy, nice-sounding thing. *I'll give this to Eleanora as a thank-you, then.* "Here you go. It's a gift."

"What is this...?"

I handed a bottle of perfume to Eleanora. The fragrance we were discussing, which Left Yumiella had on her when she'd lost control, was in my pocket when I fused back into one. It was the one gift I'd brought back from the Kingdom of Twilight.

I immediately left Eleanora's room. Behind me, I could hear Eleanora's excited screams, which sounded no different from someone in the throes of death. *I feel like this sound is going to be more memorable than anything else.*

I didn't have anything to do, so I decided to execute something that had been on my mind for a while. During this last incident, I had not simply split into two, but rather I was *able* to split into two. I hadn't died and split in half, but rather, I thought that I'd split into two, fought myself, and as a result my left half had traveled to the Kingdom of Twilight.

That's why I believed that if I tried hard enough, I would be able to split myself in two or even create a clone. Still, it was hard to imagine how I'd do either of those things. I had no memory of what it had felt like when I'd split into two, so I couldn't even figure out where to begin. *If anyone out there is knowledgeable in splitting yourself up into your left and right halves, please contact me.*

Okay, maybe I'll try sprouting wings, then. I sort of remember how that feels. It feels like something stretching out of my back. I continued to try sprouting wings while recalling what it felt like in the moment. Just then, Patrick came up to me.

"What are you up to now?"

"It seems like I can't intentionally split into two or make a clone of myself."

"I see. How unfortunate."

The fact that I'd tried to split into two again should've been shocking for Patrick, but he'd responded like he was used to this. *Do you really think it's unfortunate? It's fine, I have some good news for you anyway, Patrick.*

"I think I'm close to sprouting wings, though. I have this weird sensation on my back."

"I think your back is just itchy..."

"No, it's a more unique feeling than that!"

Patrick began scratching all over my back. *No, no, you're wrong. I'm actually*

really close to sprouting wings. Patrick continued to scratch my back, interrupting the formation of my wings. He then whispered in my ear. “You’re just itchy. Just itchy. You just have an itchy back.”

“I’m telling you—”

“Your back is itchy. Your back is itchy. You have an itchy back.”

“I feel like it’s just itchy...!”

My back was just itchy the whole time! It’s true, it feels really weird back there. I had just been mistaken about the wings, and I was also mistaken that Patrick was looking at me as if I were someone who was gullible and a little stupid.



Cold air blew in from a gap in a window, causing my black hair to gently sway in the wind. The Foundation Festival would be held soon. The kingdom that the hero and the Demon Lord built was aging another year.

Side Story: The Perfectly Planned Date

What is a date? Apparently, a date is when two people go out together to eat, shop, or see a show. Well, at-home dates also exist, so going out is probably not essential to whether something is a date or not.

“And that’s why I think that dungeon dates should be a thing,” I explained.

“Absolutely not,” Eleanora said.

Does that mean dungeons aren’t for dates?

Eleanora had asked me about what dates Patrick and I had gone on recently, and I couldn’t think of anything other than going dungeon crawling. *I’m pretty sure we’ve gone out together though...*

“Oh, we went to a café and ate carbonara. We even had coffee at the end of the meal.” *A man and woman having a meal together at a café—this has to be a date! I’m sure Eleanora, the monster ravenous for romantic stories, will be satisfied.* Despite what I thought, the girl who had already refused to acknowledge our dungeon crawls as dates began complaining about our café date.

“Did you dress up to go there, Yumiella?”

“I can’t remember what I wore several days ago.”

“You shouldn’t forget what you wore to a date, since you would’ve spent a lot of time agonizing over what to wear!”

I don’t remember precisely because I didn’t agonize over it. An additional rule that I hadn’t heard before came into play: my example wasn’t a date because I hadn’t dressed up. I had no choice but to accept my defeat.

“In that case, I don’t think I’ve been on a date with Patrick in a long time.”

“That can’t be...! I thought that your relationship was going well.”

I mean, this is only because your definition of a date is very narrow, Eleanora. Everything would’ve been fine if Eleanora would just acknowledge a wider

scope of activities as dates, but it seemed that she had a different solution in mind.

Eleanora broke into a smile and said, “I’ll plan a date for you two!”

A date planned by Eleanora... I had an incredibly bad feeling about it, but it could be surprisingly fun. It would be a good chance to visit places I’d usually avoid.

After some time, Eleanora handed me some notes. I thought the notes were an itinerary, but for some reason there were three pages, which only became more confusing when I saw that the plans took place over the course of several days.

“Um, so where exactly are we going...?”

“The first page is just for planning. The actual date is on the second and third pages.”

This was starting to feel like a hassle. There was definitely not going to be a surprise twist—it was going to be a hassle. *Well, actually, maybe it’s like a to-do list. It might look like a lot to do at first, but once you tackle each item, it might take less time than you thought.*

Before going any further, I needed to look at the first line. I began going through the items on the date that Eleanora had planned.

“Wait to be asked out.” Huh? I’m the one coming in with a plan. Shouldn’t I be the one asking him out? Whatever, there’s nothing easier than waiting to be asked out. I’ll go back to my room and think about that card game that looks like it’s going to become popular.

I began to head to my room, but Eleanora grabbed my arm and stopped me.

“You need to do your best to get Sir Patrick to ask you out,” she said.

“I need to put in effort to make him ask me out...?” Is this some new-age way of thinking?

Eleanora then explained this mysterious concept of “making an effort to be asked out.” Basically, men were supposed to be the one to ask a woman on a date, so women had to show the men that they wanted to be asked out...or

something like that. I wanted to ask, “How successful have you been with Prince Edwin doing that?” but I couldn’t bring myself to do so.

I don’t wanna do this. I’m supposed to say stuff like “I’m actually free tomorrow,” or “I’m interested in this movie, but I don’t have anyone to go with,” right? If I’m free, I could just play video games, and if I’m interested in a movie, I’ll go see it on my own.

Not only was I unenthusiastic about Eleanora’s methods, but I couldn’t imagine Patrick taking notice of such tactics. It wasn’t that he was dense. Rather, he understood that I would never use such methods to get him to ask me out.

I entered Patrick’s room, and Eleanora was waiting right outside, holding her breath.

“Are you free right now, Patrick?”

Patrick was writing something down, but he stopped to turn around. “Yeah, I’m—” he started to say.

He was probably reading the piece of paper in my hands. I stood there expressionlessly holding a piece of paper with some writing on it in both of my hands. The text on the paper read, “Eleanora is listening to our conversation. Ask me out on a date.” Perhaps that was enough for him to understand the situation, because he immediately looked at the door as if he was wondering if Eleanora was there as he responded.

“Perfect timing. We haven’t been able to go out recently, just the two of us, so I wanted to ask you out on a date.”

“What? A date? Thank you for asking me out.”

“When would be good?”

“Hmm, maybe in a week?”

“Got it. Then let’s go out, just the two of us, a week from now.”

To provide some additional context, I was maintaining a look that was even more expressionless than usual during this entire conversation. Maybe it was

because he was unconsciously matching me, but Patrick's expression was quite lacking as well. Our lovey-dovey-sounding conversation put a smile on only one person's face: dear Eleanora, who was probably pressing her ear against the door.

For the time being, I'd secured the time in both Patrick and my schedules for our date. The "getting asked out" step was done. I then went over the second line on Eleanora's itinerary.

"Spend one week deciding what to wear." I'm definitely not going to meet the deadline if I take that long.



It was the day before our date. I'd spent the entire past week deciding what to wear. The decision was whether I would wear my usual dress or something else. Eleanora had demanded I spend a week on my decision, and I'd spent the week making the decision, so I had fulfilled that requirement. Even if I ended up wearing my usual outfit, I'd still gone through the process of spending a week on that decision.

There was only one other instruction from Eleanora as to what I had to do before the date. I checked Eleanora's notes.

"Try to sleep early on the day before but be unable to sleep because you're too excited." Is she really trying to tell me how to fall asleep?

I was going to execute Eleanora's plans perfectly, so I got into bed early and properly got exci—



I slept like a log. *No, I didn't. I didn't sleep. That's right—I was so excited that I couldn't fall asleep.* Since I hadn't slept that much, I wasn't feeling too well. My mind felt foggy in the same way it did when I'd slept too much.

All right. It was the day of our date, and I was properly sleep-deprived. We were meeting up before noon, so I had plenty of time. *If I recall correctly, the itinerary carved out a lot of time to get ready before we meet up. I'll take my*

time and complete each mission.

I first checked the section regarding clothes on Eleanora's notes.

"After agonizing over two outfits, end up deciding on a third that you thought of at the last second." There's a bug that's keeping me from going any farther! I was deciding between my usual dress or something else. The options are "usual" or "something else," so what would be a third option...? Something that's not A, but that's not not A. What would fulfill these two requirements?

I'd never expected Eleanora's itinerary to touch on the concept of imaginary numbers. Just as normal people couldn't imagine what a negative square root would be, I couldn't be sure the outfit I was supposed to wear existed.

Aside from that issue, this itinerary itself was strange. The line that started with, "After agonizing over two outfits," was crossed out. The items that followed—"For your hairstyle..." and "For your makeup..."—were both crossed out as well.

At the bottom of the list of countless crossed out items, there was one line that hadn't been crossed out. That line item stood out quite a bit.

"You probably won't do any of this, so I'll do it!"

"So that's the case! I will take care of it all," Eleanora said, appearing with much too perfect timing. It seemed that not only had she left notes for me, but she was going to directly interfere with the date as well. She'd appeared with Rita, my maid, and was overflowing with several thousand times more vigor than she usually had.

"Where are your clothes, Yumiella?"

"I was deciding between my usual dress or something else."

"I knew it! That's unacceptable! Don't worry, we'll take care of everything!"

No way. I spent a whole week doing my best to make a decision... Calling that "unacceptable" is cruel.

Hello, world. I am Yumiella Dolkness. I am a dress-up doll. Two girls, Eleanora and Rita, are having their way with me, messing with my clothes, my hair, and

my face.

“How much longer will this take?” I asked.

“We’re almost done,” Eleanora answered.

“That’s what you said the last time I asked.”

“That’s because you asked me just a minute ago.”

We’d had this conversation roughly sixty times, so at the very least an hour had to have passed. I had been asking how much longer it would be every minute, just so I wouldn’t lose my sense of time. It was the same as how the Japanese navy ate curry every Friday. I maintained my sanity by asking a question every minute.

“How much long—”

“If you ask that question one more time, I won’t like you anymore.”

What?! I can’t have that happening. If Eleanora, who always repeats how much she loves me, says she hates me, I’ll be so shocked that my heart will stop. My liver will turn rock hard, and my lungs will turn dark black. The damage to my organs will be on a whole nother level.

I’d heard rumors about how space suits took hours to wear. I’d never been asked to handle extravehicular activities during space exploration, so I wasn’t sure if there was any truth to these rumors, but I could say that I’d definitely experienced something similar. Wearing a gown took as much time as getting into a space suit.

And so, I was bracing myself as the time to get changed approached, but what Eleanora brought out was a regular dress.

“Huh...? I’m not wearing a frilly gown?”

“You look better in simpler clothing. Did you want to wear something frilly?”

“Regardless of if it would be frilly or not, I thought it would be a gown.”

“It’s best to dress up in a way that is an extension of how you usually dress.”

I see... I think?

After all that waiting, my “extension of my usual self” outfit was complete. I was wearing a dress, along with stockings and boots since it was winter. I hadn’t seen these clothes before, so they had probably been purchased just for this date...by Rita.

My hair looked no different from usual. Though the style hadn’t changed, there were a few steps added to getting it ready, so my hair was about five times silkier than it usually was.

As for my makeup... A lot had been done. Apparently, this type of makeup was a “natural” look. But as makeup itself was biologically unnatural, natural makeup was “natural unnaturalness.” The natural unnaturalness(?) ended up looking quite natural.

Considering all the time it took to get me here, was this getup really an extension of my usual self? I couldn’t imagine this version of me existing on the same scale as my usual self. The actual extension of my usual self would be Yumiella Dolkness in a T-shirt and tracksuit bottoms.

And so, the hellish preparations had finished, and all that was left to do was head out. I looked at the next item on Eleanora’s notes.

“Arrive slightly late to the meeting spot without being late.” Which is it? It ends with “without being late,” so I should be punctual, but it clearly says “arrive slightly late” in the beginning, so she must want me to be late.

“Which one do I do for this?” I asked.

“This means to arrive slightly late without actually being late. I think you’ll be right on time if you leave now.”

In the end, I couldn’t figure out the truth behind Eleanora’s words to learn which she meant, but I would apparently be fine if I left then.

“I’ll be heading out, then.”

“Wait, I have one last touch to put on you.” Eleanora then began tapping something onto my cheeks with a tap-tap. I wasn’t sure what the official name for the tap-tap was, so the makeup tool and the verb ended up sounding repetitive.

“What is this?”

“It’ll make your cheeks a bit red.”

What does making my cheeks red accomplish...?



I was waiting by the entryway for Yumiella. Apparently, Lady Eleanora had planned a date for us, and we were just going along with it. I didn’t think too much of it, just expected to perhaps visit places that Yumiella would usually avoid, but I might have underestimated Lady Eleanora.

Even though I saw her every day, the Yumiella who appeared before me was so beautiful I was stunned.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Did you wait long?”

“N-No, I just arrived. Don’t worry about it.” *Was I able to hide how flustered I am?*

The air around her seemed different from usual as well. I wasn’t sure if I was just imagining that her cheeks were slightly flushed. I became worried about my own cheeks. Was I blushing?

Though Yumiella was behaving as usual, I felt strangely nervous, and our conversation was a bit stilted.

As I tried my best to act normal so she wouldn’t feel that something was off, we arrived at the café that was our first destination, also a location Lady Eleanora had picked out.

“I think this is the place. It looks like the kind of café Lady Eleanora would like.”

“Yeah, it does.”

The interior was quite elegant as well. As soon as we entered the café, I could immediately tell it was a fancy place—in other words, the kind of place Yumiella would usually steer clear of.

Having grown up in the Ashbatten Mark, which valued practicality over other

features, I was also surprised by these sorts of values that people held in the city. There were some things I still couldn't get used to, but Yumiella was even more uncomfortable with this sort of thing.

Yumiella also noticed that we'd come somewhere she wouldn't like. She gently held my sleeve as she nervously scanned her surroundings.

The Yumiella who would walk into the depths of a dungeon without a care, afraid of nothing, and the current Yumiella who was nervous to be in a type of place she wasn't used to seemed like two completely different people.

That was one of the reasons I'd become hopelessly in love with her. Yumiella usually thought and acted in a way that lacked normalcy, but every now and then, she would react to things just like other girls her age. That gap was unbearably endearing. Getting to see a rare side of Yumiella was enough to make it worth coming here.

The waitress on standby guided us to our seats. The waitress likely saw her black hair and realized the woman with me was Yumiella, but she didn't react in the slightest. As we walked to our seats, Yumiella, who'd already let go of my sleeve, whispered into my ear.

"Be careful, Patrick. This might not be a restaurant but a pancake photo studio."

I had no idea what that meant, but I liked the sound of the phrase "pancake photo studio." *I should ask her what a photo is later*, I thought as I sat down at the table for two.

The waitress opened and handed a leather-bound menu to us and pointed at the top line of text.

"Would you be interested in this couples-only drink? We started serving it several months ago, and it's now a popular item at our establishment."

"No thank you," Yumiella said, immediately refusing the couples-only item. "I think she left instructions on what we should order too." She then looked at Lady Eleanora's notes. Yumiella seemed to have found the line she was looking for, and her expression clouded over as she ordered. "One couples-only drink please..."

Even after she'd refused it, Yumiella had to ask for it herself. She'd ended up doing something strange and Yumiella-like because she hadn't checked the notes first. The waitress simply acknowledged the order before walking away.

Once the waitress was out of sight, my girlfriend sitting before me tilted her head curiously.

"What's a couples-only drink?"

"I wonder. Maybe it's something that comes as a set of two."

"I can't even tell if it's a hot drink or an iced drink. Which would you prefer? I'd prefer something iced."

"I think I'd like a hot drink."

Regardless of what this couples-only beverage was, it was clear that one of us wouldn't be getting what we wanted.

Yumiella and I had opposite tastes, to the point where we usually wanted exactly the opposite of the other. Considering that we would be together forever, I was a bit worried about that.

Actually, I couldn't think of many things we had in common. We both were skilled in battle, but our combat styles were completely different. The same went for everything else—it might look like we shared something, but if you looked at the details, we were different. I was starting to feel worried.

With nothing to do, Yumiella had created a square with her hands, and was looking through it. She was like a landscape painter who was trying to come up with a composition.

"I think this angle would be good to photograph a pancake."

"If you're feeling hungry, we can add something to our order."

"It's not like I want to eat pancakes or anything... Oh, it would add extra flavor to the photo if you were slightly in the shot."

I had no idea what she was talking about. It was probably something from the world she used to live in, but I'd gotten used to this sort of thing. If it was important, Yumiella would have explained it in a way I would understand, so this was probably an insignificant matter.

Soon after, the waitress appeared. The drink on her tray looked like orange juice. It was quite extravagant with all the ice floating on top. It also had a unique straw.

Seeing the drink, Yumiella whispered, “The fruit on the rim of the glass makes it feel expensive.”

The wedge of orange, which was the same ingredient used to make the juice, probably cost much less than the ice or the straw. I thought about pointing out that her sense of how much things cost was off, but I was fascinated by the drink in front of me.

We’d ordered a drink that was supposed to be for two people, but there was only one glass with two straws. After staring at the entangled straws, I finally realized why this was a couples-only drink. It was simple once looking at the actual item, but the stroke of genius from whoever had come up with this was worthy of respect.

“Enjoy,” the waitress said before taking off.

Yumiella sighed. “So it’s this sort of thing. So cliché.”

“I’ve never seen anything like it.”

“It’s my first time seeing the real thing too, but... Let me taste it.”

Yumiella put her mouth on the straw. *I’m going to drink this too?* The straws pointed towards us just barely stuck outside of the glass. Naturally, our faces would come close—

With a loud and vulgar slurping sound, the peaceful and sweet atmosphere of the café was ruined. The couples-only drink that was supposed to be orange was now left partially translucent due to the glass and ice.

“What a small portion,” Yumiella said upon drinking the entire thing in an instant. She didn’t seem to feel bad at all.

I looked up and saw that the waitress, who hadn’t raised a brow at Yumiella before, was staring with her eyes widened with shock. Yumiella scanned the floor and found the waitress, then raised her hand.

“Excuse me, could we get another one of these?”

Since she'd ordered another, Yumiella must have wanted to give that another shot. I thought of what had just happened and decided to drink the new one with her. I'd reset my mind, but once the second drink arrived, Yumiella broke my heart with her words that followed.

"I'm sorry for drinking it all. This one is yours."

"You want me to drink it on my own?"

"Oh, were you not thirsty? I'll finish it if you can't."

It seemed that Yumiella was determined to not follow the intent of the creator of the couples-only drink. Yumiella was quite stubborn at times like this. *Does she really want me to drink this thing, that's obviously for two people, by myself...?*

Ignoring my disheartened self, Yumiella kept scooping her long black hair behind her ear, as if she were waiting for the right moment to do something. Finally, she nervously brought her mouth up to her straw.

"I'll be on standby, since I anticipate you won't finish the drink." She then placed her mouth on the straw.

The amount of juice in the glass didn't change. She was really just on standby—just holding the straw in her mouth. This only meant one thing. I felt my face grow hot in an instant.

The cold orange juice was perfect for the rise in temperature, but since I'd said I'd prefer a hot drink, I was going to take my time to drink this...



With the way I was coming up with strange reasons and being roundabout about my feelings, perhaps Yumiella and I were more similar than I thought after all. With that in mind, I brought my face closer to the straw.



What the heck was up with that place?! What the hell is a couples-only drink?! I should've been more on guard since Eleanora picked it out.

Despite the unexpected turn of events, I got away with not going along with the intent of the drink. There was no way I was going to let everything go the way Eleanora wanted it to. All I'd done was chug the first one, then held the straw in my mouth for the second one, standing by for when Patrick couldn't finish it.

Whatever. Onto the next item. I checked our next destination on the notes. *This is... What should I do?* I showed the notes to Patrick.

*"Visit a store that relates to one of your hobbies *Note: Since this is related to the hobby of your beloved, you must act interested."*

"What should we do about this?"

"We can go to a store you like," Patrick said.

"Really? Can we go to the Yugimaster Gatheringverse shop?"

"I don't know what that is, but...I guess it's a rare opportunity, so I'll do my best to be interested."

Yay. I've never been to that shop with Patrick. There are a lot of men there, so I'm sure Patrick will become interested.



"Catapult all green! Beast of the wind, destroy all! Go, scramble summon! Machine Dragon of the Storm Winds, Jenus Eleven!"

"A scramble summon?! You didn't do anything in the last turn while having the Machine Dragon of the Storm Winds in your hand, Duelist Yumiella!"

"By summoning it at this point, I've activated the effect of Machine Dragon of the Storm Winds, Jenus Eleven!"

“M-My Ultra Beast Fortress! Noooo!”

My opponent had focused solely on the offensive and had his guard down. Thanks to that, I had an opening. He’d fallen for my scramble summon, and all that was left to do was chip away at his remaining life points.

The game had taken a turn, and I was at an advantage now, but my victory wasn’t guaranteed yet. My opponent hadn’t given up yet, and he was staring at his hand with bloodshot eyes.

“Should you really just be looking at your hand?” I asked.

“What are you...? No, you didn’t!”

“Activate spell card: Strategic Bombing of Pity and Sorrow! With this, my Machine Dragon of the Storm Winds has additional attack power!”

“I-It matches my remaining life points perfectly. Did you plan this far...?”

I did it. A calculated blow. My opponent is at exactly zero life points.

What we were doing wasn’t a game but a real duel. My opponent had lost all his life points and was naturally frustrated at his loss.

“Thank you, that was a good game.”

“GG. Wow, you were impressive, Duelist Yumiella.”

“If you’d waited a turn to set things up, I probably would’ve lost.”

“My mistake was not seeing through what you’d held back, knowing you might lose doing so.”

A duel began and ended with thanking your opponent. After praising each other for a good match, I remembered I had a spectator. My opponent was a proper adult, so he was being considerate of the person I’d brought with me.

“I’d like to battle him next,” he said, looking at Patrick. “I don’t believe we’ve met before.”

“I’m sorry. Patrick doesn’t have any cards yet.”

Following the “visit a store that relates to one of your hobbies” part of Eleanora’s plans, we’d come to a card shop. The battle that had just taken place was done at a duel space provided by the card shop.

After seeing that dramatic comeback, surely Patrick would have learned the allure of Yugimaster, even if he only had a vague understanding of the rules.

I turned to Patrick and asked, “Doesn’t it look fun?”

“What was I watching? From start to finish, I had no idea.”

“I told you. It’s called Yugimaster.”

The official name of the game was Yugimaster Gatheringverse, but it was shortened to Yugimaster. To give a basic overview, it was a turn-based trading card game...or rather, a precursor of one.

This was probably common for the starting environment of trading cards, but the game balance was nonexistent. You could draw two cards at no cost, and the cards that were difficult to play and easy to play were at times equally strong. It was the early days of this game, and there was almost no competitive playability. Despite that, the player who properly strategized would be the stronger one. *Man, card games sure are fun.*

This card shop had a unique smell to it for some reason. Perhaps it was because of the ink used for the cards.

The dimly lit, stuffy card shop was filled with Yugimaster players. Also, all the players were adults. Yugimaster cards were quite expensive for children. All these people were getting into card games despite being adults, including myself. Our resolve towards cards was just different.

After seeing my match and the rest of the card shop, Patrick was...speechless.

“I didn’t know you came to such a place.”

“Yeah, ever since I was a student at the Academy. Haven’t I shown you my deck before?”

“I thought it was just a thing you collected.”

“I’m pretty sure I explained that we use them to fight.”

“I remember you saying that, but I never imagined there were this many people who did it.”

Oh, yeah. A card game with no opponents is no fun.

Despite having seen such a fun-looking match, Patrick still seemed uncomfortable.

“Oh, are you worried that you won’t be able to remember the rules? Don’t worry, you can learn as you play.”

“That’s not it.”

“I’ll lend you one of my decks, so you’ll be able to play right away. The easiest to use would probably be...”

“Why do you have multiple bundles of forty cards?”

It’s normal to build multiple decks. As I explained that it was normal to Patrick, I thought about which deck of the five I had brought with me would be easiest for a beginner to use. *Exo is definitely out of the question, and the deck I was using earlier is a bit difficult to handle... But Patrick might be okay?*

As I stood there thinking, the store suddenly started buzzing.

“What’s going on?” I wondered aloud.

“People started buzzing after that guy came in,” Patrick said, pointing at someone.

I turned to look and saw a man with a shaved head surrounded by the other patrons. Even the employees were giving him a warm welcome...or rather, they were excessively bowing their heads to him.

I’ve never seen him before. Who is that? The people around me were saying, “It’s Yunico, it’s Yunico.”

“What?! Yunico?!”

“Is he famous?”

“Yeah, he’s the guy who created Yugimaster.”

The man with the shaved head was Yunico Xyloford. He was the developer of Yugimaster Gatheringverse. I only knew of his name and accomplishments, and I didn’t know much else. He scanned the card shop and stopped when he saw us. He then made his way towards us.

“Je suis Warrior Yunico Xyloford. Would you be interested in un match against

me, mademoiselle?”

Eugh. I guess that rumor that he speaks in a strange way that almost sounds foreign is true. But, I'd be honored to have a match against the creator of this card game. I stood there, moved, and someone on the other side of Patrick whispered at me. It was the guy I'd fought earlier.

“Duelist Yumiella, be careful of Warrior Yunico. He has some incredibly strong cards.”

“Are the cards the only strong thing?”

I could understand if his playstyle itself was skilled, but saying that his cards were strong felt strange. My previous opponent then explained the situation to me.

Yunico apparently used a card called True World, which was limited to developers and unbelievably strong players. He'd visited other card shops to say hello, but his visits had become more frequent in recent times. He would visit card shops, then obliterate his opponents by using this card, which was like a cheat code.

“What a troublesome person.”

“Exactly. He's the creator, so we all respect him and treat him with politeness, but I can't just go along with it. I've fought him once, but True World is incredibly strong.”

In the world of Yugimaster, which was overflowing with cards that were too strong, True World must've been on another level with the way he was describing it.

All right, then... I'm going to actually try and win this thing. I prepared a deck I would never use in normal circumstances and headed to the table for dueling. Yunico then headed to the seat across from me on the same table and flashed a nasty grin.

“Are you done conferring?”

“Yes. You may be *the* Yunico, but I'm going to give it everything I've got.”

“I'll let you pick who goes first, mademoiselle.”

“I’d like to go first.”

Yunico grinned again, as if to mock me for being a beginner. One rule of Yugimaster was that you couldn’t attack with a monster during the first turn. It was generally thought that the person who went second had the advantage because they could attack on their first turn.

“This isn’t your first time playing, non? If you only invoquer weak monsters, I’m going to activer True World on my turn.”

“I won’t let you use True World. I’m settling this match in the first turn.”

Though the person to go first couldn’t attack, depleting your opponent’s life points wasn’t the only way to win Yugimaster. Yunico looked dubious upon hearing me declare I would deliver a one-turn kill, but he *was* the creator of this game, and he immediately remembered the special win conditions.

“An alternative win condition. Out of the ones that let you win in un turn... You must be going for the Exodriver win.”

Exodriver wasn’t the name of a single card. There were five different cards named Head of Exodriver, Chest of Exodriver, Belly of Exodriver, Wings of Exodriver, and Legs of Exodriver. The moment you had all five in your hand, you would meet the alternative win condition.

Just looking at its effect, it seemed like a strong group of cards, but no one used a deck that revolved around Exo. The reason for this was that while Yugimaster usually allowed up to three copies of a card in any deck, you were only allowed one of each Exo card.

That meant that you only had five total, one of each, in your deck of forty cards, which made the probability of drawing all five on your first turn roughly one in six hundred and fifty thousand. As the game progressed and you made your way through your deck, the chance of having all five would increase, but that meant that the individual cards, which were useless unless you had all five, would take up space in your hand, so it would be disadvantageous towards regular gameplay.

“So you’re relying on luck, mademoiselle? What a letdown. Or are you going to cheat?”

“I won’t cheat, nor will I rely on luck.”

With Yunico having looked down on me, our match began. We each shuffled our own decks, then we exchanged our decks and shuffled our opponent’s. Yunico was suspicious that I’d planned something, and was thoroughly shuffling my deck. Satisfied with his shuffling, he spoke before returning my deck.

“I will draw your first five cards. Since you can’t see what they are, it doesn’t change anything, oui?”

“Go ahead. I don’t mind.”

Yunico drew five cards from the top of the draw pile, then laid them out on the table with the back of the cards facing up. I picked them up so I was the only one who could see them, and Yunico flashed a confident smile.

“So? Since the first to go can’t draw at the start of le turn, you have to fight with those five cards.”

“I don’t have all five...”

“Ha ha! Now my victoire is guaranteed! Let me share this little secret with you. I have True World in my starting hand. It looks like this match might be settled in my first turn.”

I hadn’t pulled all five of the cards I needed, and Yunico had pulled the one trump card he needed. Both Yunico and the gallery watching probably thought that the match was set. The only ones who thought I could still win were me...and Patrick.

“Are your cards any good? You were talking big, so you can win, right?”

“Yeah, leave it to me.”

“Though, will you really be okay with this hand? What was it? Exodriver? You don’t have a single one of those?”

Don’t worry, Patrick. It’s true that I didn’t draw a single one of them, but all of the cards in my hand are specialized in the same thing. I glanced at Yunico, who was calm and collected, out of the corner of my eye and began my turn.

“Activate spell card: Humble and Steady Pot. I can draw two cards. Next, I’ll use the spell card Express to Hell to send the Head of Exodriver in my draw pile

to the discard pile. Spell card: The Professor's Research. I discard my entire hand and draw seven. I've pulled another one, a Humble and Steady Pot."

"Wh-What are you trying to do...?!"

Surely you know what my plan is after seeing how many draw-type cards I have. I'm going to draw a bunch of cards in my first turn and gather all the Exodriver's parts. I'd built this deck so that I could draw all five parts, even if they were at the bottom of the deck.

I continued to use various cards that allowed me to draw more and dug through my deck, and eventually...

"I summon the monster card Mister Garbage-Lover. When I summon him, his effect lets me move the Head of Exodriver in my discard pile to my hand—"

"C'est Pas vrai?! I'm using Black Flash of God! I pay half my life points to nullify l'effet of Mister Garbage-Lover."

Yunico was probably worried that I was close to getting all the Exo parts, and he used a card that could harm me even during my own turn. But everything was fine. It would've been bad if he'd used it earlier, but I already had a card to counter him in my hand.

I looked for the card I needed in my hand that now had too many cards in it, and Yunico began shaking with anger.

"What are you doing? The effect of my Black Flash of God."

"Black Flash of God."

"What...?"

"I'm using one too. My Black Flash of God nullifies your Black Flash of God."

"Huh...?" he finally responded after a short pause.

I'd nullified his card, which nullified my monster card, with the same card. Yunico's face had frozen up, so I checked with him one more time.

"Are you done? If one of the four cards in your hand is another Black Flash of God, you can use it. Oh, but I have one more, so unless two of your four cards are Black Flash of God, then you can't nullify my Mister Garbage-Lover."

Yunico didn't respond, so it was safe to assume that he had nothing to hit back with. I collected the Head of Exodriver from my discard pile, and...

"I have them now. I have all five of Exodriver's parts, granting me the alternative win."

Yunico was frozen. A battle began and ended with thanking your opponent. Even if my opponent was someone who mowed down and ravaged his enemies, I wouldn't forget to do the final ritual.

"Thank you. That was a good game. It was just as fun as playing solitaire."

The shop had fallen silent upon seeing the respected creator face total defeat. The silence was broken by the sound of the door opening. Everyone turned to see who it was, and it was a man with a shaved head.

"Mi scusi, I am Yunico Xyloford, the creator of Yugimaster. I have come to say ciao since it's been a while—"

"There's two of them! One of them is an imposter!" the patrons roared in unison.



I never would have imagined that I'd fought the imposter, and the card he was using was a fake card he'd made himself.

"I'm glad I beat the imposter. I was worried I'd done something terrible to the creator."

"Yeah." Patrick nodded.

"You didn't get a chance to play today, but you must be interested in Yugimaster now, right? Why don't we play together when we get home?"

"Uh, I think I'll pass."

"Don't worry, I won't use the deck I used against the fake Yunico. Remember the guy I fought before him? I'm sure you'll have fun if it's like that."

"I can't talk that much, so I think I'm good..."

"Oh. Okay."

After seeing such an exciting, vigorous battle, Patrick didn't seem too

interested. *Strange...but I won't give up! I'll turn Patrick into a Yugimaster player one day!*

After leaving the card shop, we were on our way home. I'd had so much fun today. I knew that this was the best date we'd ever had, and Patrick probably had fun too... At least I thought he did!

We were on our way home because we were following Eleanora's plans that said, "Don't go to dinner and return home, because it's best when you leave just wanting a little more time together."

Wait... I thought going home would be the end of things, but there's something written on the back. "Say what you like about each other." I'm going to pretend I didn't see that...

I crumbled up the notes and stuffed them in my pocket. Patrick definitely didn't see that, so I was in the clear.

As we walked home, Patrick suddenly spoke up. "Today was kind of refreshing. We've gone out together several times, but it was never like this."

That's true. It was my first time dressing up to go out, and I've always avoided fancy cafés like that place we went to. We've also had plenty of dungeon dates, which were dates where we just went to beat up a bunch of monsters. And, the biggest difference is...

"Yeah, I think it was also the first time I played Yugimaster in front of you."

"That part actually felt the same as our usual dates..."

I see. I guess Patrick still isn't interested in Yugimaster... As that thought crossed my mind, Patrick continued.

"I loved our meetup in the morning and our time at the café, but the Yumiella I fell for likes to have fun playing children's games and is disciplined to the point that some people may be put off by it but still has the kindness to worry about taking down the creator of a game..."

Wait? Huh? What? Did you read that note, Pat-Pat? No way, he couldn't have. Unless he can see through objects, he wouldn't have had a chance to read that

thing. That means he's doing this unprompted, not because of Eleanora's instructions.

As I felt my face growing hot, Patrick continued.

"That's the Yumiella I love."

Usually I would go out of my way to say something weird and change the subject, but I had Eleanora's notes encouraging me. That's why I was able to share my embarrassing thoughts with Patrick.

"You know, Patrick, I also..."

Once we got home, Eleanora would probably interrogate us about the date. I would tell her all about the café, and I'd maybe even throw in what happened at the card shop. But as for what I said to Patrick on our way home, that would be between the two of us.

Afterword

Hello, it's been a while. I'm Satori Tanabata. It's been over a year since the last volume, so I truly thank you for picking up this book.

Villainess Level 99 will be getting an anime adaptation! I believe this is my first time announcing this in the books. If everything goes well, this book should be going on sale right around the time the first episode of the anime airs. It'll be airing on regular broadcast as well as online streaming services, so please check it out!

The anime has a fun twist to the first half of the first episode, and the second half shows Yumiella pummeling monsters as a child. I think it's the ultimate first episode.

I was blessed enough to watch the voice-over recordings. The studio was located somewhere in the city of Tokyo. The bullet train I took was an E6 series Komachi. The Akita Shinkansen Komachi travels through main line tracks in some areas, so it passes through train crossings, which is rare for bullet trains... Oh, but I rode it when it was connected to the E5 series Hayabusa to travel the Tohoku Main Line for the portion between Sendai to Ueno, so I didn't get to experience the unique aspects of riding a Mini-Shinkansen...

Sorry, I've gotten off topic. I was talking about the voice-over! The voice actors' acting skills were incredible! I'd looked over the script beforehand, so I had an idea of what it might sound like, but everything was not what I'd expected.

I'd read over the script multiple times, and the animation wasn't done yet, but it was still fun to listen to! Yumiella seemed like a calm character, but she was uncomfortably passionate when it came to level grinding, and Alicia had an orthodox cuteness to her, and the love interests all made me laugh as well. They all seemed very fun.

After seeing their incredible acting, I couldn't just sit there. I remember playing the part of a tree in a show put on by my kindergarten class, and my grandparents praised me, saying I was a genius. I wanted the professional, popular voice actors to acknowledge my own acting prowess, so while I was at the recording studio, I pretended to be a stone statue.

And so, I went to watch the recording of the voice-over, but I was really nervous. Everyone else wasn't nervous, so they were able to put their talents on full display, which led to the creation of a wonderful anime.

I talked about their voices since I was discussing the voice-over, but everything else was great as well. When I first saw the trailer, I was so moved by seeing Yumiella move, and I was so impressed by the screenwriter who wrote scripts that matched the runtime of each episode!

Animation requires the involvement of many more people on this series than before. There are probably over a hundred people who did a lot of work that I wouldn't understand and that I'm not aware of.

I can't believe that a novel that started as something I posted on my own has become such a big thing... I have nothing but gratitude.

As usual, I've gone a bit all over the place with what I want to say. I feel like I talked about completely unrelated things as well. What I wanted to say was, "Thank you very much to everyone who worked on *Villainess Level 99*!" And also, "Bullet trains are amazing."

Both statements are truly how I feel, and they will never change. And so, I hope you check out the anime *Villainess Level 99*!

Next, I'd like to talk about the comic adaptation. The manga version of *Villainess Level 99* is still ongoing as well. The squishy Yumiella you can also see in the anime is just adorable. I'm no match for nocomi, who is able to handle multiple mediums that are just as entertaining as anime. I'm always thankful for nocomi's work.

Finally, I'd like to discuss this volume, volume six.

As usual, Tea—who has done all the illustrations until now—did amazing work. Especially with the cover art and the color inserts. Tea drew the left and right sides in a way that kept them from looking completely unusual. Personally, the cover for this volume is my favorite out of them all! Oh, but I like the first volume's cover too and the third one... I like them all. Thank you always for your hard work!

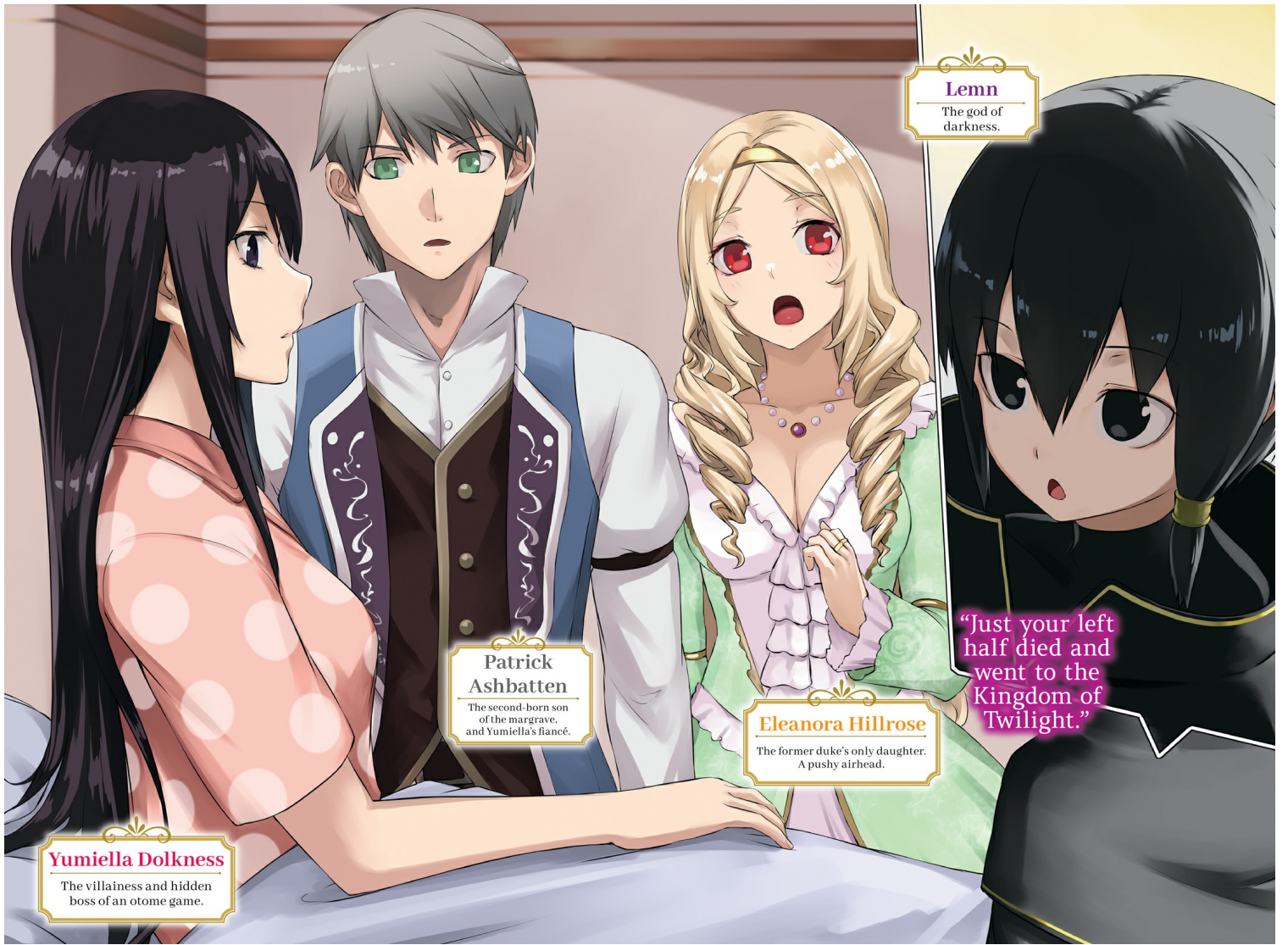
If you're reading this before reading the book, look forward to what I mean by "left and right sides." If you've already read the book, then I hope you can look at the illustrations again and have fun.

To the editors, who always help me out; to the illustrator, Tea; to everyone involved in the publishing of this book; and to everyone who continues to support this series—I truly thank you.

Yumiella wanders into a
mysterious kingdom...?!

“Welcome to
the Kingdom
of Twilight.
This is a
kingdom where
the sun is
constantly about
to rise and
where people’s
regrets gather.
I’m the king of
this land.”

VILLAINESS
LEVEL 99
6
I May Be the Hidden Boss But I'm Not the Demon Lord



Yumiella Dolkness

The villainess and hidden boss of an otome game.

Patrick Ashbatten

The second-born son of the margrave, and Yumiella's fiancé.

Eleanora Hillrose

The former duke's only daughter. A pushy airhead.

Lemn

The god of darkness.

"Just your left half died and went to the Kingdom of Twilight."



“I wish for the
downfall of
the Kingdom
of Valschein.”

The “hero” who founded the Kingdom of Valschein and the Demon Lord,
whom he sealed away, face off...

“What is it
that you wish
for enough to
turn yourself
into that?
What do you
want to come
back to life
for?”

VILLAINESS LEVEL 99

I May Be the Hidden Boss
But I'm Not the Demon Lord

6

SATORI TANABATA

ILLUST. TEA



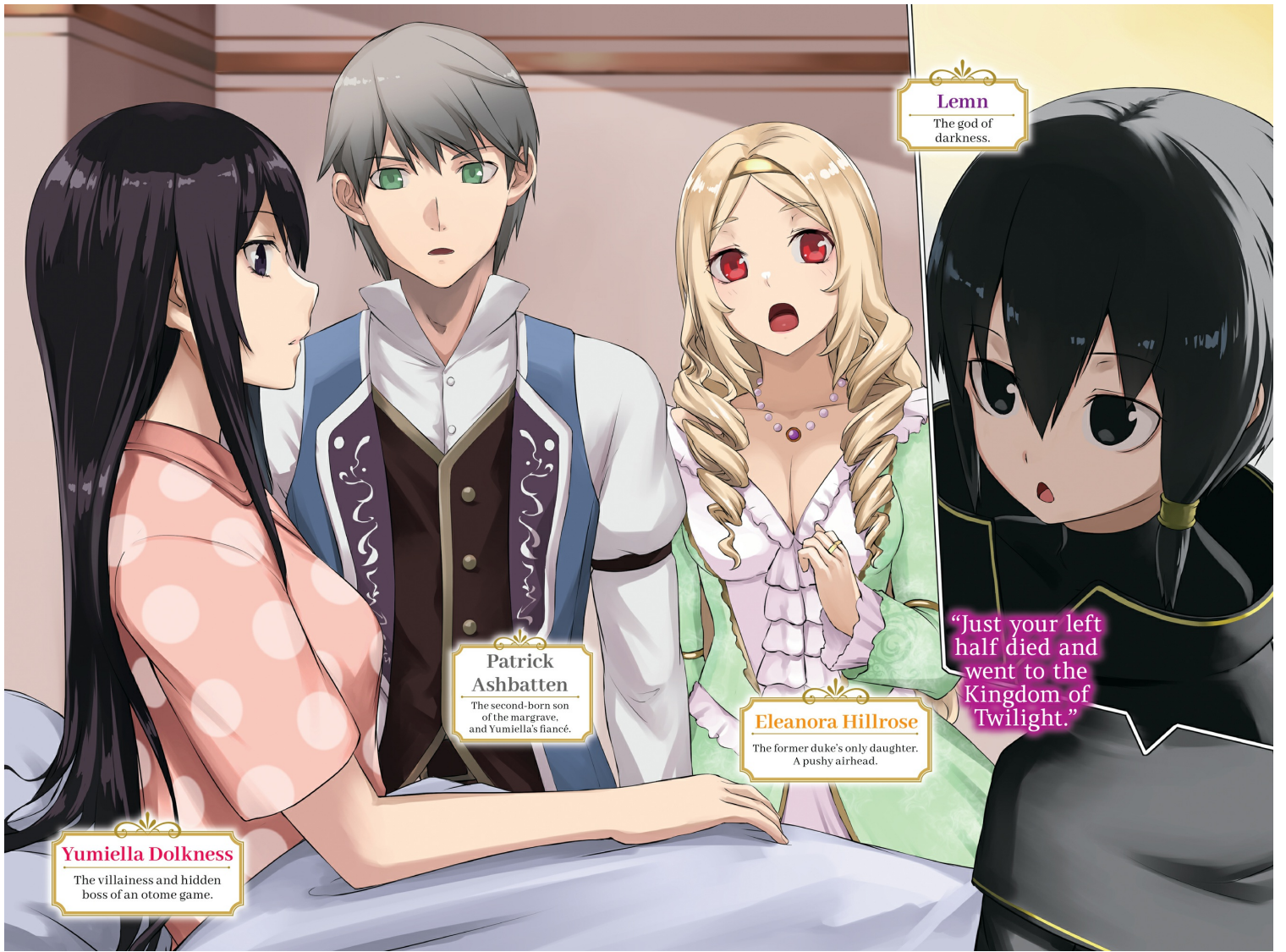


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Villainess Level 99: I May Be the Hidden Boss but I'm Not the Demon Lord Act
6

by Satori Tanabata

Translated by sachi salehi Edited by Heidi Ward

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