

Chapter 2 - It seems to Be Events in the Bath

If you were to listen to the stories, it should be a facility that had been constructed at a ridiculously fast pace, but the bath house built in the outskirts of Klinge had been built so neatly that it surprised even Renya. Seen from outside, it merely looked like a warehouse or something like that, which had only bricks piled up on top of each other, at a first glance, but the interior was decent, and on top of having a proper separation into men and women sections at the entrance, the dressing rooms for men and women also possessed quite the substantial size. Baskets to put in the clothes, bathrobes apparently provided to cover the body after leaving the bath, clean towels, and many other accommodations had been prepared in considerable numbers.

No matter how you thought about it, it wasn't a facility to be used by one person, but because the facility itself was mostly in a state of being booked out with the archduchess currently occupying the women's bath, Renya was alone in the men's section.

Going through something like a sign curtain that had "Men's Bath" written on it, he passed an attendant's booth, which had been placed there for some reason, continuing to the dressing room. It was apparently a Trident custom for men to change into yukata after taking off their clothes at this place.

Incomprehensibly, such a custom didn't seem to exist for women, and Renya was told by Frau that this custom was limited to men. He had been fairly puzzled by the logic behind this, but as she insisted that it was a custom, he didn't have any room to object. Although it wasn't as though he didn't harbor any doubts about the existence of a bathing custom in a human country that shouldn't have the custom of entering baths often.

The yukata for men was something like simple short pants with a size that had quite a bit of leeway. Of course they were made out of a fabric that wouldn't become transparent even after getting wet.

The instant Renya saw it for the first time, he felt like he somehow understood the reason why women didn't put on the yukata. In case of men, it'd work out one way or another with wearing those short pants, but women would need to wear a yukata covering them from top to bottom if they planned to hide everything. If something like that were made out of a thick fabric that wouldn't become transparent even after getting wet, it'd probably be impossible for them to wash their bodies, in addition to the yukata becoming too heavy during the bathing.

Wearing his yukata while admiring that it actually followed some kind of logic, Renya passed through the door separating the dressing room and bathroom, and was taken aback by the sight spreading out in front of his eyes.

The bathtub that had been established there was something that didn't qualify to be called a bathtub when compared with Renya's common knowledge. If he were to go with a word that would describe his impression best, it would actually be pool.

The bathing area following after the washing place to clean the body was filled with somewhat white, cloudy, hot water, and endlessly big in length and width. It continued all the way to the wall very likely separating it from the women's bath. The distance was roughly 25 meters going by Renya's estimate. Moreover, the length and width of the bathing area seemed to mostly have the

same size.

Seemingly as countermeasure against peeping, there were no windows in the bathroom. Renya didn't know whether the lamps installed at the ceiling were some kind of sorcery tools or <Bright Light>, but considering the bathing area's size, he felt that the illumination was somewhat lacking as it was slightly dark in here.

It had such a huge size that it woke the urge in him to question just how many people would be able to fit into a huge bath of such an extent, but persuading himself that only this might already be proof of the abundance in hot spring water, Renya scooped up hot water with one of the provided buckets for starters.

Renya wasn't all that knowledgeable about the manners when entering a bath, but he at least knew that it was necessary to properly wash off the dirt from his body before getting into the bathtub. After he had poured plenty of hot water on his body, warming himself to some extent, he rubbed the provided soap across his entire body creating bubbles all over.

The foamy body of Renya was slender to such an extent that one wouldn't be able to imagine it being suited for combat. In the eyes of a third party, it didn't look like his body possessed overly many muscles. Based on that, many would look down on him by his appearance since the soldiers of this world looked muscular, but this was owed to Renya's body having experienced a different way of forging compared to the soldiers of this world.

Usually Renya didn't have a powerfully built body that would emphasize its muscularity. Only at times when it was necessary to use strength, tough muscles like twisted wires would stand out on his face.

".....*slurp*"

Feeling that he had heard a strange sound, Renya shifted his eyes towards the bathtub. The steam rising from the hot water had a considerable density. Coupled with the hugeness of the bath itself, the visibility wasn't really good.

However, leaving aside the women's bath, the only one using the men's bath was Renya. Thinking that he had misheard since there was no reason for anyone else to be here, Renya averted his eyes from the water, and focused on washing his body again.

Although it was called washing his body, Renya had at least a bathroom in his own mansion, and even his room in Baron Gordonal's mansion in the Gordonal Barony had been equipped with a proper bathroom. Something that was provided had to be effectively used, and since Renya kept his body always clean, no obvious dirt was washed off his body here.

However, given that sweat and similar should always stick to a body, Renya diligently cleaned himself with the soap, going even as far as cleaning the spaces beneath his nails, and then, after scooping up hot water with the bucket again, let the water stream down his body that was fully covered with foam.

The hot water that streamed down his body continued onwards, getting drained towards the wall on the opposite site of the bath as the ground had apparently been provided with a slight inclination,

and flowed into gutter-like holes in a corner of the washing place.

While being positively astonished by the well thought-out setup, Renya finally headed towards the bath. The edge of the bath was something like a stairway with the water depth gradually deepening as you advanced deeper inside. Furthermore, it also allowed you to enjoy the bathing by sitting down on the steps.

It was set up in such a way that the water level would reach up to his chest or slightly below once he descended the first stair step from the edge, and sat down with his feet placed on the next lower step. With half of his body being somewhat submerged in the hot water, Renya took a single, deep breath.

Going by Renya's standards, the water's temperature was at a point he'd describe as somewhat lukewarm, but it still gave him a fairly good feeling. And now that he thought about it, the cloudy, hot water was interesting as it had a slimy touch that felt somehow good on the skin.

Renya enjoyed the hot water in this state for a while, but thinking that a Japanese person should submerge in a hot spring up to the shoulders, Renya rose half to his feet, and tried to lower his feet on the next lower step. But in the next instant his body vanished within the hot water, as if he had fallen into a pitfall.

"Eh?"

'Even if I say so myself, I must admit that just now was a fairly dumb sound.' Without even the time to finish that thought, Renya ended up completely sinking in the bath. In other words, the stairway reached from the edge to the second step, but beyond that the water became deeper than Renya's height, seemingly having been designed like that.

He might have noticed it if the water had been clear, but it was impossible to see this layout in the cloudy water, and certainly not having expected that the water would become deep all of a sudden, Renya directly sunk down in the deep water. Given that it was all too abrupt, he didn't even have time to close his eyes. Probably because of the hot water's temperature, or maybe because of the hot spring water's quality, he became unable to keep his eyes open as his eyes were assailed by a dull pain.

Notwithstanding all that, Renya somehow managed to surface again by swimming in a standing position without panicking, but now, unable to secure visibility, his sense of direction had gone a bit haywire as he had struggled to some extent when sinking down, resulting in him not knowing in which direction he'd find the bath's edge.

If his body hadn't sunken in the hot water, the method of grasping the situation in the same way as he did when fighting against Emil's clone would have been available to him, but with his body being submerged in hot water, that wouldn't work well either.

There existed a difference in the reflection and transmission of sound between water and air. Someone accustomed to that might have been able to adjust, but in Renya's case it would ultimately be an auxiliary measure, and nothing that he was accustomed to.

Renya thought, 'Please spare me from having to call for help due to drowning in a bathroom,' but

around the time when he started to believe that it was inevitable as he still couldn't open his eyes due to the stinging pain and had no other option besides loudly shouting for help, someone gently grabbed Renya's hand even though it was a bath that should actually be empty except for Renya.

"Renya, are you okay? Come this way for the time being. If you don't wash out your eyes, you won't be able to open them because of the pain, you know?"

"...There's something I'd like to say first, but...well, okay."

Renya, who still couldn't even open his eyes, immediately grasped the voice's owner because of their characteristic way of speaking. However, the owner of that voice was a woman. No matter what, it was wrong for that person to be here right now. Even while wondering just what was going on, Renya moved through the bath while being led by her hand, and was finally able to sit down at the stairs part at the edge.

"Here, take this wet towel. This hot water is great for the skin, but I feel like its stimulus is slightly too strong."

Accepting the towel which was apparently held out by the presence, Renya first wiped his face with the towel that contained plenty of wetness before opening his mouth. Once he finished, the unpleasant stimulus, which had assailed his eyes, was cleaned away, and Renya became able to finally open his eyes again.

"It might have been slightly cold because it was soaked in water I created with sorcery, but since there would be no point in a towel soaked with the hot water here, I'd like you to put up with it."

"No, well, that part is fine, but..."

"We have to later inform Frau that it's necessary to prepare normal water in advance. Having said that, I wonder why the bath is so deep?"

"...Before that, why are you here, Croire?"

Once Renya turned his eyes to his side, he saw Croire's puzzled expression. Without even trying to hide her slender, naked body, she was bending herself outside the bath with her knees on a part of the first step. She didn't wear even a single towel, freely exposing her pure white, stainless skin. Even her smooth butt and her flat chest were on full display from where Renya was sitting.

'The part of her long, blond hair being wet while partly submerged in the hot water is a sight for sore eyes,' Renya thought, but originally this place was the men's bath, a place where Croire shouldn't be.

"If I hadn't been here, you might have drowned, no?"

"I'm grateful for your help. ...Were you also the source of that weird sound?"

The origin of that odd sound Renya had heard while washing his body was apparently Croire.

Having that pointed out, Croire said while gesturing as if waving it off, "I saw something beautiful."

"...I'm going to charge you money, you lil' peep."

"I can get a front row seat if I pay for it!?"

Not having imagined even in his wildest dreams that Croire would take a bite at it in such a way, Renya pushed the towel, he had used to wipe his face, into Croire's face, who had been hanging over the bath's edge all the time, and pushed her body back while holding his head with his other hand.

"From just where did you sneak in here? It won't be possible to let customers in if it's that easy to pass back and forth between the women's and men's bath."

"I think it will be alright. Normally it's impossible."

As Renya pondered whether he should have Frau revise the security protocol, Croire continued pointing at the wall dividing both baths at the end of the bathtub after winding up the towel that had been thrust into her face, and tossing it into a bucket that had been placed outside the bath.

"As a matter of fact, that wall has a gap at its bottom, connecting this place with the bath over there."

"Isn't that no good then!?"

"Creating separated water channels for drawing the hot water for the women's and men's bath would be a hassle right? Anyway, as long as hot water continues to enter from one side, it means that the baths on both sides will be filled."

"That's an invitation to peep as much as you want, isn't it!?"

Croire held Renya, who was panicked that there was a problem at the very root of the bath house's design, back while waving both hands.

"No, not at all. The depth of the water around there is around three meters. Although you might call it a gap, it's so narrow that I barely fit through it."

Being told that, Renya rudely stared at the naked body of Croire who was sitting next to him. Croire's figure was very elvish with her small shoulder width and her lacking proportions. As far as he could see of what was supposed to be her chest, it was at a level that could be positively described as modest, and negatively as her still being lucky that it wasn't sunken in.

Croire splashed the bath's hot water at Renya's eyes, who had assessed that there was likely nothing there to sway, while maintaining a smile. Having been careless, Renya was completely covered by the water, bending back while holding his face as a dull pain assailed his eyes again.

"Uuooooohhh!?"

"Just now you thought something reeeally rude, didn't you?"

While allowing her displeasure to seep into her voice without even trying to hide it, Croire took out the towel from the bucket, and passed it to Renya, who was still holding his face, after wringing it out lightly. Receiving it, Renya wiped his face again, and protested to Croire with his eyes slightly teary.

"If you don't want me to think about it, then just hide them."

Croire puffed up her cheeks at Renya who insinuated that he'd think about weird stuff because he could see her naked body.

"I don't see the point in hiding them with just you and me being here."

"I'm fine with you, if you're okay with it, though."

"I'm...fine, you say?"

Croire quickly narrowed her eyes, and drew her body slightly closer towards Renya. The words she had uttered in a subdued manner made Renya somehow feel a shiver travel up his spine. Due to her conduct and voice so charming that he wondered just what he had permitted with "being fine," Renya ended up even wavering whether the blood flowing through his body was actually flowing upwards or downwards.

Croire trying to lean in close to Renya, who had started to become so flustered that he felt such hallucinations, in order to apply even more pressure on him was forcefully interrupted by the appearance of a certain intruder.

"Okay~ That's the end of the indecent conduct~"

It was such a flat and lackluster voice that it immediately threw cold water at any overheating mind.

Once Renya turned his eyes into the direction where Croire was looking with a face teeming with bloodlust as if her charming expression until now had been a lie, his mouth dropped partly open as he couldn't believe his own eyes due to the figure standing over there imposingly.

"Enter the strongest power within the human realm~ the highest authority of the Trident Principality~ Archduchess Lydia Femme Fatale-chan~"

While introducing herself with quite dangerous titles and a slow voice lacking even a splinter of tension, the one entering through the men's bath's entrance with vigor while smiling all over her face and freely flashing her two hills that might very well be the highest peaks of humanity was a person, who definitely shouldn't be here, and someone equal to being Renya's boss at present, Archduchess Lydia Femme Fatale.



Because of her all too sudden entry, Renya couldn't avert his eyes or look down, which would be the least problematic conduct in this situation. In other words, the outcome was him fixedly staring

at the archduchess' body which was on full display with her dauntedly posing in the nude, an action anyone would consider questionable for a woman.

As for impressions, you could somehow sum it up with the word, "earth-shattering." Renya had also harbored a similar impression back when he met her before, but either way, right now his mind was filled with the thought that the archduchess, who didn't hide anything, was earth-shattering.

It wasn't as though she was fat in any way. However, Renya couldn't say anything due to the intensity of the archduchess' fleshiness which likely overpowered Rona by leaps and bounds. She possessed a beauty barely scraping the dangerous line of possibly degenerating into an indecent, comical figure if she were to gain a little bit more unnecessary weight at some part.

Moreover, Renya was astonished by the fact that there were no drooping parts to be found on her body which was endowed with such a quantity of mass. You could truly call it the finest masterpiece which conquered gravity with the natural capabilities of a human body.

But then again, Renya didn't have a clue whether the people of this world would be able to understand the concept of gravity even if he were to explain it to them.

As he had been using the bath, it naturally took the form of Renya looking up at the archduchess who was standing imposingly at the washing place, and that also resulted in the archduchess' body having even more of an impact.

The archduchess flashed a faint smile of triumph due to Renya having frozen with his look still being pointed at her, unable to speak thanks to his blank amazement. For an instant, Renya was about to get pissed off, thinking that she might make fun of him, but immediately noticing that the archduchess' eyes weren't pointed in his direction, he tried to follow her line of sight, wondering what she might have seen to reveal a smile, and was immediately hit by a strange sensation.

He had been feeling the warmth of the hot spring water transmitted through the half of his body submerged in the bath, but the body half above the water surface started to feel an intense chill. Once Renya timidly looked in the direction of the source of that chill which he could feel from his side, he instinctively pulled back while splashing water around due to the presence he found there.

A face completely lacking any expression, with the eyes widely open. Even though the long, wet, blond hair had released a bewitching sex appeal until just moments ago, it was now repelling the light from the ceiling, possessing a metallic coldness like icy wires. The small, cute lips endlessly continued murmuring something with such a low voice that it was barely audible, but Renya had absolutely no clue what she was saying.

While calming his racing heart, which was throbbing for a completely different reason than just several minutes ago, by placing his hand on it, Renya estimated that her murmuring seemed to be elvish, which Croire hadn't used overly much recently, and changed his mind to elvish. Immediately following, the sounds, which he had been hearing, rushed at him as words bearing a meaning - a meaning that terrified Renya.

"Crush kill burn tear beat break pierce stab split gouge torment strike kick whittle slice cut crush kill burn tear beat break pierce stab split gouge torment strike kick whittle slice cut crush kill burn tear beat break pierce stab split gouge torment strike kick whittle slice cut kill burn tear beat break

pierce stab split gouge torment strike kick whittle slice cut kill burn tear beat break pierce stab split gouge torment strike kick whittle slice cut kill burn tear beat break pierce stab split gouge torment strike kick whittle slice cut cut cut kill kill..."

Forgetting even the warmth of the hot water, Renya shuddered, believing that he was probably going to die here.

While scattering such intense pressure into her vicinity that it caused Renya, who had not once felt such a heavy pressure since coming to this world, to tremble, Croire stood up from the bath, swaying like a snake. Her elven, naked wet body was fairytale-like within the faint light, but right now Renya didn't have the leeway to admire it.

Behind Renya, who was pondering whether he should somehow try to do something about this or simply turn tail and run away from here, the archduchess looked at Croire, who was standing in the bath, and laughed scornfully while still boldly standing at the washing place.

"If you don't have any bulgings~ the water drainage must be nice, and on top of~ that, drying should be easier too, right~?"

"Is it fine for me to take this as your last will, human!?"

Her mana, which swelled up explosively, turned into physical pressure, causing the surface of the bath to violently stir. As the hot water's surface was splashing and billowing, although it was nothing capable of washing his body away, Renya began to secretly move deeper into the bath, trying to get as much distance from Croire as possible, while protecting his eyes so that no hot spring water would enter them, seemingly having learned from his previous experiences.

"You have pissed me off. That crime deserves certain death."

"Oh my, oh my~ I wonder, is that an inferiority complex of someone not possessing what others have~?"

Even though she was probably sensing the heavy mana pressure and anger thrown at her, the composure didn't vanish from the archduchess' expression and complexion.



Wondering whether she might be hiding some kind of secret weapon, Renya observed the situation while using a bucket that had been tossed his way as a cover, but the archduchess was visibly nude, and it didn't seem as if there was any place allowing her to conceal something. But then again, since Renya had heard that there were countless places to hide something on a woman's body, he knew that he couldn't unconditionally trust his own eyes, but either way, even if the archduchess had some kind of method at hand, it shouldn't be anything suitable to be deployed in a bathroom.

Even while believing that it might be a waste of breath, Renya called out to the two for the time being, "Can't you guys at least enter a bath quietly? Or rather, this is the men's bath. If you burn to have a battle, go back to the women's bath."

Renya thought that it was a truly decent remonstrance considering his current situation, but the reply only made it obvious to Renya that he had wasted his time pointlessly.

"Renya, please stay silent and watch. This is a place where I can't pull back as an elf."

"It's the duty of a senior to train~ lasses who haven't even given birth yet~"

Of course, even Renya hadn't expected at all that the situation would come under control by them obediently accepting his remonstrance. However, he had hoped to gain a little bit of time.

Because of the huge amount of mana gushing out of Croire's body, the area around her was getting damaged. He needed that time to grasp just what the archduchess, who didn't even budge within that violent mana wind, was planning to do.

'Her own weight, and her leg strength, huh? Come to think of it, she's the mother of Shion. If I consider the aspect of physical strength, it wouldn't be odd even if she were to possess power at the same level or beyond that of Shion. As for her own weight, I think it's needless to say, but it's impossible for a body boasting that much volume to be light. Still, her strength and sense of balance to keep standing in the face of that devastating mana pressure on top of the wet, slippery stone floor is nothing to scoff at,' Renya thought in astonishment.

"In other words, it means she's confident that she can somehow handle it at this combat distance, even if Croire takes some lethal action."

The probability that Croire would use sorcery indiscriminately, swallowing up everything on a wide range, was exceedingly low. After all, such a spell would naturally involve Renya, who was close to her. In such a case, it was possible to predict that the spell used by Croire would have an effect limited to a single target.

If it was that kind of spell, it wouldn't be all that difficult to knock out the caster, as long as one had the leg strength to instantly close the distance without misreading the moment the spell was activated.

"In short, she's saying she's confident in battle because she isn't a mere figurehead archduchess."

Renya gazed at the two, who remained in a deadlock as they glared at each other, while being

submerged in the hot water up to his shoulders, asking himself what he should do.

"The quickest and easiest methods would be to either escape or to blow both away. However, if I chose either of these methods, I wouldn't be able to avoid damaging the bath house itself.

Leaving aside the archduchess, he felt like even just the aftermath would be rather tremendous if he were to carry out an attack capable of knocking out Croire. And if he ran away, Croire wouldn't need to worry about involving Renya anymore, losing all restraints in the process, and could deploy a wide-area spell without any need for hesitation.

A plan ranking second best would be to side with one of them, and knock out the other together. Since a two vs. one would be a very advantageous situation for the inferior side, it'd likely be possible to wrap this up without much damage to the building, but it'd have the demerit of creating hard feelings with the party he didn't support.

He also tried considering calling the others, but immediately rejected that idea. Currently there was no one in Klinge who would be able to stop the archduchess with words, and even if there was someone, who could stop Croire by overpowering her, this would definitely lead to the destruction of the building.

"I'm at a loss..."

It'd be a different matter altogether if he were to be okay with causing damage, but Renya didn't want to break the facility, which Kurz, Grün, Keith and his men had built with utmost effort, without it having been in use much yet. While pondering what he should do, Renya covered his shoulders with the bath's water.

The white, cloudy hot spring water, said to be good for the skin, somewhat felt slimy on Renya's skin, causing Renya to suddenly realize, 'Come to think of it, hot springs for beautiful skin are often alkaline baths, aren't they?' Once he considered it like that, he could also understand the pain that assailed his eyes when water came in contact with them earlier.

"The hot spring water that has gushed in Klinge very likely contains a very strong alkalinity. Because of its effect of dissolving old keratin, it's known as hot water for beautiful skin, but on the other hand, it's also known to cause a strong stimulus on the skin and mucous membranes. Its nature of breaking proteins apart is actually quite dangerous.

There existed cases where strong alkalinity was said to be more dangerous than a strong acidity. Renya decided to order Frau to add an installation that would provide normal water at the washing place after this. Going by the feeling from actually having taken a bath himself, the alkalinity wasn't so strong that it would have an immediate effect on the human body, but there were also people who should wipe their bodies ahead of time since it wasn't quite clear what effect it would have if they allowed a weak alkalinity to come in contact with their skin for an extended period of time.

Putting off those thoughts for later, Renya called out to Croire and the archduchess, who were still scowling at each other, in order to realize the method to suppress them, which he had somehow managed to come up with, while soaking his hands in the hot spring water.

"Both of you, if you don't give it a rest already, I will use force."

"Renya, please be quiet. I can't forgive this old hag who got in our way even though we had a good mood going at long last."

"Fufufu...Margrave Kunugi is~ going to have a blast with my Shion~ by having a wet making out session with her in the bath later~. There won't be any turns for a washboard elf~."

'What's with that way of description?' While wondering about that, Renya scooped up some of the bath's water, albeit not much, with his palms.

"I warned you, okay? <Water Sphere>."

The bath water scooped up by Renya turned into two bullets, and headed for the faces of the archduchess and Croire. However, the archduchess slapped it down with a wave of her hand, and Croire scattered it apart with a single sweep of the mana gushing out of her body.

"Ah!?"

The one raising her voice was the archduchess. Her ability to repel the water bullet, which came at her with a considerable speed, was something that could be expected of her, but the broken water bullet turned into a fine mist, spraying against her face. Several drops got into her eyes. Although it was just a small amount, the stimulation assailed her eyes, causing the archduchess to stagger as she reflexively covered her face.

Croire tried to attack her after identifying it as a good chance, but Renya's comment stopped her in her tracks.

"Croire, above."

"Pardon?"

Reflexively looking upwards as told, Croire noticed the sphere, which was filled to the brim with a large quantity of hot spring water, hovering above her head. For an instant she was unable to comprehend, but after a second, Croire understood that it was the bath's water gathered above her head with Renya's <Manipulation>. She realized that the first water bullet served as a restraint and decoy, and moreover, that her next action wouldn't be in time because she mowed down the decoy with her mana.

"Renya!?"

"Too late."

Once he released his constraint through <Manipulation>, the large amount of bath water that had been floating in the air poured down on the archduchess and Croire from above. The water hit Croire directly into the face as she had looked up. The archduchess, who had been rubbing her eyes while holding her face as a small quantity of water got into her eyes at the beginning, got somewhat diagonally hit by the water since she was in the middle of lifting her teary face after perceiving the presence of the falling water. Both screamed at the same time.

""My eyes!? My eyeees!?"

The archduchess, who had been at the washing place, and Croire, who was washed out of the bath due to the pressure of the falling water despite being at the bath's edge, were both suffering as they covered their faces with their palms. Their appearance how they rolled around was nothing but comical, being very far from having any sex appeal.

If she were to calm down and think it over, Croire would realize that she just needed to wash her face with water from water sorcery, but because her eyes were assailed by pain, she was apparently unable to make a calm judgment as she cried out like that.

While sighing, Renya poured water created by sorcery into a bucket that had been washed over in his direction as he looked towards the entrance of the bathroom. Renya had perceived it since a little while ago now how several presences had gathered there.

"What are you guys doing there?"

The ones who opened the entrance door very slightly and peeked inside through the gap were Shion, Rona, and Kilie.

"We came after mother...err, Her Majesty, the Archduchess to stop her, but..."

"Just as we were about to rush in, we couldn't, and thus waited to see how things develop."

"Renya-san...you sure have a nice body, don't you? Is it okay for me to take a picture with a sorcery tool for recording?"

A bucket filled with plenty of water directly hit Kilie's face as soon as she voiced out the last comment. Of course it had been thrown by Renya. Kilie's body slowly crumbled down due to the impact of the full bucket in addition to the strength of the throw.

The entrance door was thrown open because Shion and Rona, who were surprised by the water splashing around due to the impact, moved in order to dodge the water. Thanks to that, Renya perceived that their clothes had become quite slovenly. It looked like both had originally been taking a bath in the women's bath, but hurriedly chased after the archduchess who had suddenly rushed out after learning that Renya was in the men's bath.

"...You will catch a cold, so warm yourself up."

"R-Really? I-If you say so, Renya. P-Please excuse me then..."

Shion, who had apparently misunderstood Renya's concern as acknowledgment for mixed bathing, started to get rid of her clothes in the dressing room. Rona looked back and forth between Renya and Shion, flustered.

Renya was about to correct that misunderstanding, but seeing the archduchess and Croire still rolling around in the nude, he reconsidered. In the present condition, where had ended up seeing this, he somehow felt the urge to do something similar to getting rid of a bad aftertaste.

"While at it, I'd like to have some personnel to request the to clean up Croire and the archduchess who will likely continue rolling around until they run out of strength.

"Renya, is it really alright?"

"Do as you please. However, if you're going to enter, cover your body with a cloth or something. And, if you can get in contact with her, tell Frau to prepare normal hot water to rinse the body when stepping out of the bath. As you can see, this hot spring water seems to be slightly too stimulating."

Once Renya jerked his chin in the direction of the two rolling around on the floor, Rona lightly shook her head after seeing that, and confirmed Renya's request.



"Ah~ that was really terrible~"

Renya, who had been enjoying the view of Shion and the others preparing for the bath in the dressing room while coiling a cloth similar to towels around their bodies without having to peep, revealed a startled expression when he saw the archduchess abruptly standing up while speaking up as slowly as she did normally. He fully knew it himself because he had experienced it as well, but the pain from the hot water, which Renya had used just now, entering one's eyes and its effective period wasn't anything you could recover from in such a short time.

Renya believed that it might be recognized as simple stimulation leading to <High Recover> not working on it, but either way, the archduchess' recovery time was so short that it far surpassed Renya's estimation.

Without minding Renya's look, who was wondering just what was going on here, the archduchess slowly submerged her body in the bath while briskly rubbing her eyes. Just in case, Renya checked Croire's side as well, but that side had completely run out of strength due to rolling around in pain, showing no signs of getting up while breathing roughly as she laid upside-down.

"Margrave~ it's no good if you look at a woman as if watching a monster~"

Having submerged in the bath up to her shoulders, the archduchess grinned broadly, apparently having noticed Renya's stare. As far as Renya could see, her eyes were only slightly bloodshot, but it seemed as if the pain had completely faded away. Without knowing what he should answer, Renya said what came to his mind for starters while watching her huge boobs floating in the water.

"How about covering your private parts a bit, Your Majesty?"

"I don't possess~ anything so seedy-looking that I would get embarrassed about it being seen~"

Once the archduchess replied in such manner while making her flabby boobs sway in the water, Croire reacted with a twitch while still laying on the floor, but as she didn't appear to have recovered her strength to the extent of being able to get up, there was no response from her except the quiet sound of her grinding her teeth in vexation that reached Renya's ears.

"Besides~ the clothes provided here~ don't have enough fabric~ even if I tried to hide them, you know~?"

Being told that, Renya once again turned his eyes towards the dressing room that was in full view since the door had been left open. Over there, Rona was in the middle of barely managing to cover her body with one of the provided cloths.

Of course it had been Frau who had prepared those cloths, but Renya was sure that it was very likely Rona who registered as having the biggest proportions in Frau's mind. In such a case, he could only call it natural that it wouldn't be possible to hide the archduchess' body with those cloths, seeing how it boasted a volume exceeding that of Rona.

"Margrave~ you're also happy if you can see them, right~?"

"I prefer a slightly hidden state over a showcasing."

In response to Renya smoothly answering the archduchess, who was broadly grinning at him, with an unmoving expression, she started to splash bath water at Renya with a considerably disappointed expression, seemingly being extremely unhappy with his answer. Just as Renya blocked the water by holding up his hands, Shion and the other two, who had finished their preparations, modestly entered the bathroom.

"Renya, sorry for having made you wait."

"No...it's not like I've been waiting, you know..."

Shion had slid into the water next to Renya while combing her hair up with a smooth, natural motion. The parts that ought to not be seen were properly covered by the cloth wrapped around her body, but even just the parts that were actually visible were so stimulating that they caused Renya's heart to race. Moreover, because she sat down right next to him, the archduchess succeeded in splashing hot water into Renya's face through a gap in his hands as he had unintentionally lowered them.

Even though it was quite painful, Renya had prepared himself, seeing how it was the third time, and thus he washed out his eyes with water from a bucket, which he had prepared outside the bath in advance, while bearing the stinging pain.

In the short moment when Renya had his sight stolen, Kilie tried to wedge herself between Shion and Renya, but that ended with a short intermezzo as she was grabbed by her nape by Rona, and mercilessly slammed into the bath at a place distant from Renya. However, since Rona's actions took place speedily and quietly while Renya was washing his eyes, he didn't realize it.

When his sight returned, Renya could only see Rona sitting down next to Shion with a nonchalant expression, and Kilie splashing her own face with water she created through sorcery while clinging to the edge of the bath on the other side in panic.

"Just what are you people playing at..."

"Nothing in particular. By the way, Your Majesty, I wonder what should I think about you rushing out in the nude just because Renya is in the middle of taking a bath?"

'The precondition here is weird,' Renya thought, but didn't voice out that retort. That's because he felt he would get to hear an answer that would be wrong on several levels in the instant he spoke up.

"I wonder, was there~ anything more important~ than seeing~ the margrave's nude body~?"

Renya sighed deeply after hearing a reply he mustn't hear even without any retorts.

"Mother...that's no response that you should give in front of your own daughter."

Shion protested while quietly placing a hand on Renya's arm.

Just when Renya was about to warn her that it would be way too risqué in various meanings for her to place her hand on his arm while wearing such an attire in a bath, the archduchess very smoothly replied to Shion's objection, "Oh, as a matter~ of of fact there~ was something~, an important topic~."

"Pardon?" Renya asked back wondering whether he had heard her correctly due to the totally unexpected reply.

"As I said~ there is~ an important matter to talk about~" The archduchess asserted with her slow way of speaking without a shred of tension, but even after hearing it once more, Renya couldn't perceive it as anything but having misheard her.

Renya turned his face in Shion's direction who had her hand still resting on his arm. Since the slightly flushed face of Shion was closer than he had thought, Renya got startled, but while investing great effort into not showing it on his face, he asked Shion.

"Did you hear her saying something about an important matter?"

"Yeah, I did, what about it?"

Having confirmed that he apparently didn't mishear things, Renya turned back in the archduchess' direction again.

"An important matter?"

"How often~ are you going to ask, margrave~?"

Renya desisted from phrasing out that him asking back several times couldn't really be helped since he couldn't feel an atmosphere from her that she would be talking about something important from now on. Moreover, he wondered whether a bath was the right place to bring up an important talk, but he kept silent about that part, too. On top of inevitably feeling that it would be meaningless to repeat this routine several times over, the other party was tentatively the highest authority of the country and his boss.

"So, what kind of important matter would that be?"

When Renya urged her on, thinking that it might be better here to go along with the archduchess in order to get on with the story, even if it had some aspects that were somewhat difficult to swallow, the archduchess put on an expression similar to a child scheming a prank for some reason, and said, "Saying it seriously~ or unseriously~, which would be better?"

"Please go with the serious option."

Renya thought, 'It probably won't register as important matter at the moment it's treated unseriously,' but it was plain as day that the archduchess would dodge that with a "You sure~?" when he tried to point it out.

"Eh~? What a bummer. Even though~ it's about~ whether we should decide~ on a day for the wedding~"

"Mother, I can't really close my eyes to you using that as material for an unserious talk."

"By the way~ the bride is me~"

"Can I have you step outside with me, mother...?"

Rona grabbed the shoulder of Shion, who was about to stand up from the bath with glazed eyes, restraining her. It's because she fully understood that the archduchess was joking around. Furthermore, if Shion were to go on a rampage here after her physical abilities shot up in Baron Gordonal's city, it was almost certain that the building wouldn't be able to evade fatal damage, no matter how sturdy it might be.

If she had completely lost it, Shion wouldn't be stoppable with such a level of detainment, but she apparently had enough reasoning left in her to understand that it was Rona's hand that had been placed on her shoulder. While submerging into the bath again albeit reluctantly, she didn't stop at placing her hand on Renya's arm this time, but instead embraced it closely.

In Shion's eyes, she was probably intending to make her own claim on Renya clear with this. However, as Shion's naked body was only covered by a cloth right now, and since there was no way for Renya, who had his arm wrapped up by her, to shake her off, he first off began to put strenuous efforts into continuously expelling the various signals, which were transmitted from his arm to his brain, out of his awareness.

"It's a joke~, just a joke. Speaking of important matters, there are actually several~ First, I will appoint Rona-chan as saint~ in the name of the Trident Principality~"

A grand sound of water splashing was audible behind Shion. At the end of Shion's and Renya's line of sights, who had turned around wondering what happened, Rona, who apparently was about to get up, spontaneously slipped and fell into the bath. Moreover, as it seemed like the hot spring water got directly into her eyes, she started to struggle due to the pain she experienced for the first time. Right now Kilie was in the middle of frantically trying to pull Rona to the bath's edge.

Kilie was almost dragged down into the depth of the water instead, probably because of the difference in body weight, but once she somehow managed to drag Rona to the edge, she carefully

showered Rona's head from above with sorcery water, telling Rona to wash her eyes which were assailed by the stimulus of the hot spring water.

"Y-Your Majesty!?! Just what the heck is me becoming a saint about!?" Rona yelled out while rubbing her eyes, using the water flowing down gushingly from the top of her head.

Renya had never heard the term 'saint' before, and thus looked at Shion to get an explanation about its meaning from her.

"Mmh? Oh, I see. Although the title is called 'saint,' it doesn't really connect with anything for you, does it Renya?"

"Is it something like a hero?"

Renya attempted to make an educated guess going by the word's nuance, but Shion shook her head at that, "So far as it goes, standing and authority is attached to the title 'hero.' However, a saint...how to describe it best? ...is someone respected, allowed to carry out their function with a lot of flexibility, but they have no authority...can you understand from that explanation?"

Renya managed to somewhat reach his own interpretation through Shion's explanation she somehow came up with. He thought that it might be something like an honorary title.

"The religion originating from the Holy Kingdom, which~ had propagated on a large scale until just recently, has become obsolete, right~? Because of that a new teaching originating from the Trident Principality spread on the human continent~ Did you know about that?"

Except for Renya, the three others nodded their heads at the archduchess' words, but Renya tilted his head to the side in confusion. Renya irresponsibly believed that the religious group located in the Holy Kingdom had probably lost its power because they were the leading authorities behind the criminal he had annihilated, but it was the first time for him to hear that a new faith had sprung forth from the Trident Principality, taking their place.

"You see~ It seems to stem from a beautiful girl with twin-tails and six pairs of shining wings standing at the bedside of several of our country's priests~ and proclaiming that she'll hand out plenty of divine protections~ if they were to~ start a new religion, or something like that~"

Renya was astonished how this whole process got started by an action similar to a bar's barker calling out to people. Apparently that thought showed on his face. Shion smiled, Rona somewhat pulled a face full of mixed feelings, and Kilie started to splash the hot spring water behind Renya for some reason.

After silencing Kilie by driving a cluster of hot spring water with <Manipulation> into her face as if to counterattack her while thinking, 'What would you have done if your splashing had hit my face?', Renya faced the archduchess.

"Well, all those priests~ next said that they received an oracle~ that Rona Chevalier, who's currently staying at Klinge, should be nominated as saint~"

"Also from that beautiful twin-tail girl or whatsoever?"

"Yeah, she seems to be the principal object of worship~"

"What's the merit of a saint acknowledgment?"

The archduchess revealed a faint smile at Renya's question. It's because she understood that titles were insignificant to Renya and that he apparently saw no worth in considering something like the religious implications stemming from it.

"It will lead to me taking her back to the capital for some time, but~ she'll be able to read as many of the treasured books of the church as she wants~"

"Where's the merit in that?"

"It'll widen her repertoire of divine arts~"

In the first place, Rona held the position of an apprentice, and thus she had only a limited number of divine arts at hand as people of her standing had only restricted access to information about divine arts. Unlike sorcery, divine arts couldn't be acquired by simply paying money. You wouldn't be shown and taught any divine arts unless you piled up a fair amount of achievements for a church and held a reasonably high position within the organization.

However, if it came to a saint, it was a position allowing to have insight into any divine art without any restrictions. Jumping to such a position in one leap from being an apprentice could certainly be called a merit.

"It's not that I won't be allowed to come back from the capital or something along those lines?"

Once Rona asked so while pondering that it might have some aspects worthy of consideration, the archduchess turned her face towards Rona, and asked in reverse, "Maybe if there's some reason~ for you to not wanting to return~?"

"Unthinkable. My place is to always be at Shion's side."

The archduchess smiled in satisfaction at Rona making such a clear-cut statement.

"Then you just have to return, right~? I'd also hate to incur the margrave's displeasure by restraining you against your will~"

"Wouldn't it be fine to simply have the headquarters of the church relocated to Klinge then?"

As Kilie cut in, Renya suddenly wondered whether it was really alright to allow Kilie, who ought to be an outsider, to listen in on an important talk by the archduchess. Even though that should be a natural question anyone should be able to come up with, no one except for Renya seemed to be bothered by this issue.

"If that's what you say~ it might also be fine to try considering that option~"

Moreover, the archduchess obediently agreed with the words of a simple peddler. Renya didn't even

try to hide his feelings of suspicion as he wondered just who the hell this person might actually be.

Unclear whether she knew of Renya's thoughts, Kilie directly looked into his eyes, returning a broad smile that made him sense some kind of fishiness from it.



What the archduchess called an important announcement apparently was a considerable shock for Rona. Renya decided that he should leave Rona, who kept mumbling under her breath with her face cast down as she brooded over the matter with half her body submerged in the hot spring, to her own devices for the time being.

"Mother, is that all you wanted to talk about?"

The archduchess suddenly and forcefully threw out her chest with a somewhat triumphant expression upon Shion's question. Seemingly perceiving this from the archduchess' presence, Croire repeatedly twitched while still laying face down on the floor, but Renya made an effort to disregard this as well.

"I said that it's several~ matters, didn't I? You simply don't listen~ to what others say, Shion-chan~"

"Haah...but, could there be any other matters as important as the appointment of Ro as saint?"

For Renya it was a story he couldn't really connect with, but the appointment of a saint seemed to be a rather major issue. Renya believed that Rona's reaction might be quite reasonable in such a case, but even Renya couldn't come up with a matter that could be just as important.

"You see~ I'm going to appoint you as general certified by the Trident Principality~ and pass on the ancestral armor~ of the Fatale House..."

"No need."

Shion immediately returned an indifferent reply, without putting any emotions into her words.

Stuck between Shion, who seemed to enjoy the hot bath with a composed expression, and the archduchess, who completely froze in a state of wanting to insist on it, Renya didn't know how to deal with the silence that had suddenly occurred between the two. He let his eyes wander, looking for some assistance, but Croire remained motionless, Rona continued mumbling something under her breath, and Kilie was whistling while looking into the far distance, apparently having no interest in getting involved with somebody else's affairs.

As Renya was glaring at Kilie's profile, believing that her distraction was way too obvious, the archduchess, who finally revived, asked Shion in a tone teeming with her conviction that it was unbelievable, "Why~ Shion-chan~?"

"I'm not suitable for being a general or something like that...in the first place, our ancestral armor is

that thing said to have been used by our honorable ancestor, right?"

"Correct~ It's that black, hard, big thing~"

While grinning broadly again after completely changing her attitude, the archduchess made sure to bend herself forward in Renya's direction. Harboring a feeling of dejection as he wondered what he should think about her way of talking, Renya scooped up hot spring water with his palms, and splashed it into the face of the archduchess to counter her approach.

Without looking at the result of that, Renya asked Shion, "What kind of armor is it?"

"It's a plate armor suit that covers your whole body. Certainly, it's big and black, but more than that, it's heavy. I hear my ancestor could easily move around while wearing it, but that's impossible for me. It's been handed down that it will repel any kind of blade or magic attack, but if you use that many thick armor plates, you could only call that a natural outcome."

"T-That's not all it has going for it~"

Apparently having been more than cautious enough, the archduchess had managed to fend off Renya's counterattack somehow. Still, as she would be troubled if the water entered her eyes after dripping down from her hair and face, she wiped it off with her hands and arm, and now that she had become even warier of Renya's following attacks, she didn't try to approach him this time.

"Even as a weapon~ it's amazing~"

"You mean that thing where it's unclear whether it's an iron plate or a sword, mother?" After answering to the archduchess with a tone as if she was fed up and bored, Shion turned her face in Renya's direction, and began to explain, "It's a longsword with a crest that's said to have been used by our ancestor as well, but...the blade's length is around my height, and its width is approximately equal to Croire's shoulder width."

Since the comparison targets were in front of his eyes, Renya could more or less picture its shape. Even if he couldn't imagine its detailed molding, it would be a great sword exceeding a length of two meters if you added the hilt part, assuming that Shion's explanation was correct. If it had been created with its whole body being made out of metal, its weight should be beyond imagination, making it very difficult for Renya to consider it a weapon that could be handled by one person.

It's just a marginal note, but the one with the smallest shoulder width among those present in the bathroom right now was Croire.

Making sure to keep the comment, "It's because she has nothing that needs to be supported," locked away in his heart, Renya brought up another matter.

"You won't be able to wield something like that, will you?"

At least Renya himself had absolutely no intention to fight while swinging around something so heavy, but after pondering about it for a little while, Shion answered in a way Renya hadn't anticipated.

"If it's just swinging, that's possible one way or another."

"One way or another, you say...?"

'If it's simple physical strength, she might soon exceed me, I suppose,' Renya assessed. 'Then again, Shion's body doesn't look all that muscular at a glance.'

That meant Shion's body was forged in a way resembling that of Renya. From Renya's point of view, it could be called ideal, but he also felt like the effect had gone slightly too far.

"No matter how you think about it, fighting with that is impossible."

"Though I think just being able to swing it is already plenty amazing."

"That evaluation doesn't really make me happy...is what I'd like to say here. Anyway, mother, even if you want to confer such a boorish, heavy armor to me, I'll turn it down since it doesn't serve any purpose."

The archduchess dropped her shoulder in disappointment over Shion's clear-cut rejection.

"Even though I wanted you to use it~..."

"If you want to confer something to me either way, make sure it's usable, mother."

Renya tried to overlap his image of the armor he had heard about just now with Shion's appearance as she said this to her discouraged mother. The image of Shion wearing a thick plate armor suit while swinging a great sword as tall as herself around coupled with her rampage from the other day only reminded Renya of the term Berserker. For some reason he felt like he could even hear a rough snuffling.

It was something he didn't want to experience from close-by, but considered as possibly quite amusing to watch from a distance.

Renya was absentmindedly following such thoughts, but suddenly he was pulled back into reality by a stinging pain assailing his arm. Since the pain originated from the side where Shion was, he turned his eyes to that side. Over there, Shion had apparently stabbed her nails into Renya's arm with a strength that they wouldn't penetrate through his arm's skin.

After looking at his skin that had become slightly red, he shifted his eyes to Shion's face.

Shion spoke up while staring at Renya with a huffy look, "Your face looked like you were thinking about something very rude."

Being told that, Renya let his eyes wander so as to gloss over the fact that he was more than aware of what she was talking about. Perceiving from his actions that her words had apparently hit bull's eye, Shion grabbed Renya's shoulder, violently shaking it left and right.



"You most likely thought that it would be funny for me to look like a thick headed iron woman, didn't you!?"

"I haven't gone that far."

"That far means you've thought about something close to it, right?"

Renya frowned, realizing that his grabbed shoulder was about to complain about the pain anytime soon. 'Even though her instantaneous power is a different matter altogether, her continuous strength has reached quite a level, too,' Renya suddenly thought when looking at Shion who was shaking his shoulder.

Shion's equipment had never changed since they met for the first time. The weapons she used were only items buyable in stores or the training weapons Renya made for her. Her armor hadn't changed since their first meeting at all, but although it looked like it had been made carefully, it also didn't leave the region of being an armor with a careful making.

Given that clothes were outside Renya's field of expertise, he didn't know what would be good, but compared to Renya's clothes, which Frau had especially created for him, Shion's clothes were remarkably inferior in performance, even if they had a proper form. Renya wondered whether it wasn't about time for her to change them.

At present Renya didn't know at all just how much and who he would fight in the future, but he couldn't shake the feeling that this girl would be at his side, no matter what he might fight down the road. For better or worse, Shion had obtained ability allowing her that much, moreover she was fully aware of it herself. On the technical side she had still a long way ahead of her, but now that she had gotten rid of the shackle called lacking ability, Renya believed that it might be difficult to keep Shion away from the upcoming battles.

'Isn't that rather the perfect time to change her equipment into something that will compensate for her technical shortcomings then?

"Well, leaving aside turning you into an iron daruma..."

"Daruma?"

'It looks like my preceding Lost haven't introduced the concept of daruma in this world.

"Your Majesty, I will take care of Shion's equipment. Based on my way of thinking, it would have a bad outcome to stuff her into equipment that's hard to move in as it would lower her combat prowess instead."

"Really~? If that's what you say, Margrave Kunugi~ it can't be helped, I guess~ I just thought that it'd be a waste~ to keep it around~ as useless ornament~"

The expression of the archduchess as she said this didn't look all that unhappy in Renya's eyes.

'What if she has brought up this topic while being fully aware that Shion wouldn't accept the ancestral armor of the Fatale House from the very beginning? Or maybe the archduchess had started this topic with the intent to tell me that I should do something about Shion soon, seeing how the battles around me have been gradually becoming more intense,' Renya considered.

'I can't believe that she's a person choosing such a roundabout way, but if it comes to the position of being the highest authority of a nation, there might exist various circumstances that have to be considered when requesting something from a subordinate. Either way, let's not pursue that matter any further.

To begin with, the only one knowing the whole truth was the archduchess who had brought up this topic. It was also possible that you could regard Renya's guesses as overthinking matters. She might have seriously planned to confer that ancestral armor, which was apparently a clump of iron, to Shion.

'The possibility of either to be true is around 50-50, I suppose', Renya thought to himself.

Renya currently harbored the impression of the archduchess that she seemed to be absentminded, but actually wasn't, and that she was a sharp and capable person, albeit having some parts to her that didn't fit that description at all.

"I think~ I can feel relieved if it'll be~ based on your judgment, Margrave~ Please take care of it, okay~?"

"At your will."

"I don't have a third topic~"

Renya, who had wondered whether still more would follow, breathed out secretly. No matter how you looked at it, it had become at talk far too long to be held in a bath.

Rona, who had been silent since a while ago, had now a bright red face for some reason with her head having started to sway unsteadily. Even Croire, who still didn't move after having collapsed, might have become completely boiled by the bath's steam since she had completely run out of strength. Shion's expression showed that seemed to be still fine, but Renya could perceive how even the archduchess, the originator of all the topics in question, was gradually starting to look beside herself.

"Your Majesty, should we change locations? I feel like everyone's going to faint from dizziness very soon."

"You're right~ There's just a little something left, however~..."

Seemingly grasping that she was getting close to a dangerous level herself, the archduchess groaned while deliberating. At that point, Kilie who had watched their exchange quietly until now, cut in.

"Your Majesty, should I inform Margrave-sama about the remaining topic?"

"Hmm? Let's see~ it might be smart~ to tell only the margrave about the remaining topic~ and

entrust the decision to his discretion, I guess~"

Renya thought that the archduchess' response was odd, but he tried to question her about something else.

"Your Majesty, is that peddler over there an acquaintance of yours?"

"That girl, you know~ is a member of our intelligence unit~ Since the remaining topic stems from them~ it might be easier to have that girl explain the rest~"

"Intelligence unit, eh?"

Once Renya looked at Kilie as if examining someone shady, Kilie quietly averted her face from Renya's scrutinizing stare, pretending that it's a very natural occurrence. In Renya's mind the idea of strangling her neck until she would spit out the truth popped up, but if she truly was a member of the intelligence unit, she should have been trained to endure something like that. Renya, who wasn't a specialist, had no confidence that he could get her to divulge the information forcibly.

"Shion, I'm going to listen to Kilie's issue, so can you take Her Majesty, Rona, and Croire with you, and get out first?"

"I want to hear...no, I got it."

Shion was on the verge of objecting, but she decided to follow Renya's instruction, apparently having reconsidered. She got out of the bath with the cloth still wrapped around her body, put Croire on her back, lifted up Rona and the archduchess at their waists with her arms, and exited the bathroom with her bare feet audibly making squishy sounds as she walked across the wet stone floor.

Renya ended up being fascinated by her movements as his eyes unintentionally followed her back since she had picked up the three very energetically without any delay. Once Shion vanished inside the dressing room, closing the door behind her, Kilie quickly brought her body next to Renya from the place she had been so far.

"Intelligence unit, right...?"

"Tentatively it's no lie. Though I'll be troubled if you keep looking at me with such doubtful eyes. For the time being, there's two pieces of information I can tell you from my side." Kilie formed a V sign with her right hand. "The first is related to the domain of the demons. Information has completely stopped flowing in from that side. It looks like some kind of barrier has been deployed over there. Those people, who are close to the demon domain while entrusted with reconnaissance duties, have apparently become unable to enter the territory under the demons' rule."

Renya didn't know how long the boundary line between the human and demon domains might be, but assuming that the entire area has been covered by something like a barrier that prohibited entry, the barrier's scale had to be very huge. For an instant Renya believed that there must be some kind of loophole somewhere, but he immediately denied that possibility himself. It's because he believed that it was impossible for an organization with the name of an intelligence unit to provide information to the archduchess with such a sloppy investigation.

'However, assuming that to be true, it means that a very huge barrier has been deployed, which likewise produces the questions from just where they have obtained this much energy and for what reason they have deployed such a barrier.

Before Renya could rack his brain over a question without any answer, Kilie brought up the second piece of information, "Second, we still don't know how it's with the other continents, but...it appears that things like the coastlines and mountains on the human continent have started to collapse."

Leaving aside her remark, Renya, who happened to have a slight inkling as to why the coastlines and mountains collapsed, was panicked for a moment that those incidents might have come to light unexpectedly, but obviously having anticipated Renya's worries, Kilie shook her head.

"It's unrelated to your deeds, Renya-san. The mountains turn into sand and sink into the ground, the coastlines break apart and fall into the ocean. Those kinds of collapses have been observed all over the place."

"That's..."

Renya was hard pressed for words as he tried to say something. It's because Renya actually had an idea about that part as well. Because the resources to maintain the world were decreasing, this world was slowly but steadily heading towards its ruin unbeknown to its residents. However, very likely that was a piece of information no one besides Renya knew on this world.

'I wonder whether those aren't the omens of this decline.

Having arrived at that idea, Renya felt like a cold shiver traveled down his spine.