

NORTH X NORTHWEST

Prologue

Lil held up her trembling eyelids, for some reason it was hard to open her eyes.

‘The light is so bright.’

Because of her stinging eyes, tears were flowing down her cheeks. She tried to rotate her head, but her neck didn’t turn properly.

This time she wanted to cover up the light with her hand, but it didn’t move.

“Ugh...”

Lil, still struggling, eventually closed her eyes, unfortunately the violent light even digs into the smallest gaps.

She closed her eyes even tighter, causing her forehead to wrinkle. Meanwhile concentrating on every part of her body. Efforts to move were continued, but none were successful, including her legs.

She didn’t even seem to be able to wiggle her toes. When she realised her cripple condition, a terrified feeling crept in.

‘Where is this place?’

She took a quick breath.

‘Elegant scent... it smells like furniture, pleasant air in a large space. Damn it! I don’t know any places like this...’

“You must have woken up.”

Startled, her breath hitched. Lil opened her eyes reflexively and immediately closed them, spitting out curse words.

'I never thought someone was there. He was so close, how could I not have known?'

"Is it too bright?"

'A man, Sesbron accent... Damn it, what happened? Am I lying in front of a noble man?'

Lil desperately began to trace back her memories.

'I don't understand what's going on.'

She couldn't grasp the situation.

'Why am I like this... Why can't I move? What happened? I can't move... I can't...'

"Let's turn off the anaesthetic incense first."

'Anaesthetic incense? For what?'

With no time to think about it, an unbearable pain started, spreading all over her body.

Lil couldn't make a sound and swallowed a scream. When her limbs in response to the pain started to tremble, she somehow tried to raise herself.

"Ugh! Ugh, damn it!"

Her first instinct was to get out of this unfamiliar place, her reckless attempts, of course failed.

She concentrated on every nerve in her body, but in the end she could only breathe heavily.

"You can talk right?"

"..."

No matter what the man said, she was too distracted. It felt as if the skin of her stomach was torn. The pain was so vivid, that it really seemed that way.

“You don’t seem to be interested in me at all.”

“ ... ”

From the tone to the content, the man’s words were strange, for it was not meant to be said to a person dealing with excruciating pain.

Lil struggled to turn her head. As expected, it still didn’t move properly, and she only managed to shift the angle of her gaze.

Since there was no movement, she began to have various ominous speculations. The tormenting feeling was spread all over her limbs, it made her wonder if her whole body had been mutilated.

The man looked at her confused face and explained kindly.

“Oh, I administered some poison a few days ago. I’m sure your muscles are stiff because of that. Seeing you struggle to get away, I think it was an excellent choice. It will become difficult if you run away, right? Afterall it was my mission to capture you.”

“ ... ”

“It’s made from Maltine*, I hope that’s okay.”

‘What kind of crazy sound is that?’

“It’s... It’s...”

“Don’t get me wrong, I’m not a coward. It was either this or cutting off one of your limbs. I’m actually quite proud of myself, especially if you consider my infamous reputation.”

Only then did the hazy memories begin to stir her head. The recollection, that came to mind as a shipwreck, showed the sight of her being stabbed.

‘Yeah, it was a total mess.’

She was at a loss, she always thought she was perfectly hidden. Looking at her current situation, she became even more devastated.

“...Retiro.”

The man seemed to laugh.

“It’s an honour you remembered, Captain Lil Schweiz.”

“Madman... get out and die...”

With dim eyes Lil moved her gaze in search of the Admiral. Unfortunately, her eyes didn’t function properly, so her vision was blurred.

“If you hear that kind of curse every day, it’s not so impressive anymore. Can’t you come up with something new?”

She didn’t have the energy to respond to that childish question. Not knowing when her body would lose consciousness due to the strange drug, she concentrated on her own thoughts.

‘All right, focus.’

She decided to list the places that roughly come to mind.

‘The Admiral’s fleet...’

“Captain”

‘So, it can be the Southern Sea...’

“Lil Schweiz”

‘Or....’

A gust of wind blew through her hair and Retiro’s face suddenly appeared in front of her.

“Argh! Argh! Ahhh...”

While her whole body trembled and twitched in surprise, Lil barely managed to swallow the rest of her screams.

She wanted to spit, but in this state, it was almost impossible to even reach the tip of his nose. She'd be lucky if it didn't slip straight down her own chin.

Lying stiffly as if she's stuck in a coffin, she couldn't prevent his face from coming even closer. When his breath touched her cheek, she felt nauseous.

'No, I'd rather die!'

Lil tried to turn her head with all her might, making every part of her body scream.

"Argh! Argh..."

Her miserable distorted face was caught. His touch felt as if needles were piercing her skin, creating terrible goosebumps.

"Let go... You bastard!"

She bravely raised her arm. Unexpectedly the hand of the Admiral easily fell off, however the pain that followed engulfed her as if to devour her.

"Aww! Damn it... Damn it, damn it!"

"Oh no. I'd stay still if I were you..."

"You fucking bastard... let me out of here!"

"...Because the Bell Rock won't be safe."

"..."

Her feet, that she was kicking around like a madman, suddenly stopped. Bloodshot eyes turned to the Admiral. He was observing her with an amusing gaze.

She couldn't make a sound and was panting like an old dog.

"That's more like it."

She's out of breath and unable to move, with messed up hair and sweat flowing down her forehead. To the man standing in front of her, she looks shabby and helpless.

When Lil's heart started to pound and it almost felt like it was going to burst out of her body, a very relaxed voice hovered around her head.

"So please cooperate, your Bell Rock is safely anchored in Devito. However, your crew was brought to Gualthiero."

"Gual... thiero..."

The famous prison.

"Where am I?"

"This is my house in Mondovi Peninsula, and you are all alone. Why, do you want to go to Gualthiero too? I'd rather stay here."

At the same time, he silently glanced over her body. His gaze went down before he met her eyes again. Suddenly the Admiral waved a necklace with a crude red jewel in front of her face.

Only then did Lil realize where he was looking at. A cold shiver ran down her spine.

"Who knew that Lil Schweiz..."

She wanted to cover her chest.

'Am I wearing clothes right now? This fucking bastard...'

"Is in fact a woman."

'No way...'

"If you don't want to be exposed to the whole world..."

-End of prologue-

*Footnote: Maltine: medicinal preparation made from or containing malt.

