

Northwest 181

Chapter 181

Levi, as tall as Ed, stood in front of the bed as if protecting Lil. The message from her bulging eyes was clear. But even though Levi was shielding the bed to the best of her ability, Ed could still see Lil, who was lying on the edge of the bed due to the need of a change of clothes. Ed gaze briefly lowered to the blood-soaked clothes on the floor. At the same time, the maids around the bed gathered the stained dress and basins before leaving the room.

Remarkably, Levi seemed to be unconditionally standing her ground. However Ed didnt want to argue with Levi, especially with Linhardt there, so instead he hurriedly looked away from her. With the bed on his right, his line of sight drifted towards the left. The space in front of the fireplace was in disarray due to the decorative sword above it being forcefully removed, and a little more left lay a tumbled chair and a broken vase.

His face twitched slightly as he slowly looked around the room, and then, like a possessed man, walked forward. Eds eyes narrowed while focusing his attention towards the decorations on the mantelpiece.

So, she drew a sword

Linhardt let out a sigh and repeated his words.

Yeah, you heard me, right? A sword on us

And then something like this?

..?

Ed turned away from the fireplace and headed for the window. He started off walking normally but suddenly stumbled like someone drunk. It was because the carpet had been scuffed messily, hence resulting in Ed mimicking the stride and steps of Lil. As he followed Lils traces, his face grew more and more delighted. After passing the remains of the vase and the overturned chair, Ed finally reached the window.

Like this! She walked like this!

With an expression undeniably filled with joy, Eds shoulder shook greatly every time he breathed in.

Against the background of the night, Eds excited face was reflected in the glass. Noticing that he could see the night view outside, he realised that the curtains had been opened.

Ed cheerfully asked why the curtains, he had closed himself, were open now.

Why did she open the curtains? Why

After examining the torn curtain, Ed pulled it further away and eagerly peered through the glass. He then enthusiastically put both his hands on the window frame. The clear sky was exceptionally bright, and the waxing moon floated high.

Ed easily deduced the most basic of human habits.

She checked the time. All right, so theres a time element Or rather, did she want to confirm what I told her? Couldnt she believe that this much time had passed? Patients who wake up after a long period of unconsciousness usually experience the loss of sense of time as most traumatic. Yes, that could be. I wish it was the latter I wish it was the latter

Levi and Linhardt looked out the window before staring at Ed who was talking to himself.

He sank so deep into his thoughts that hes only repeating that the latter is much better like some kind of madman

I told you, hes losing it.

Yeah, really. Should I keep him away from the patient?

Suddenly returning to the large desk, Ed picked up his glasses and scrawled something. It was a large desk unsuitable for a bedroom, but the desk wasnt the only awkward piece of furniture there. The room has turned into something comparable to a research lab, with various professional instruments and medical equipment crammed into it.

Even though it wasnt the first time he saw it, Linhardt clicked his tongue at the sight before him. Every time he witnessed it, it annoyed him because it brought back memories from 10 years ago

It was when he brought that foreign girl and did all kinds of crap. If he loses this woman as he did back then, theres no estimate of how long he will be digging again. At that time, he dug up the lands on the Western Continent, so it can very well be the Central Continent now.

Linhardts head already started hurting from only thinking about it.

Edgar doesnt know how to back down. He habitually says that medicine is a domain developed by humans, but he never admits that the realm is terribly limited. He insists that the area is actually wide like hes pushing out the walls himself, with his own body.

Linhardt was sure he already knew the outcome.

The woman will eventually die, unable to endure the experiments done on her Edgar has already done the crazy thing of injecting her with that poisonous Maltine Only because he became impatient and frustrated with the repeated situation of her seemingly waking up, but unable to regain full consciousness Hes still the same, still greedy, arrogant, and selfish

Linhardt spoke firmly to Ed, who was holding the quill.

Theres no progress.

Ed, who had been sucked into the desk, raised his head. The glasses he wore sparkled in the bright light of the chandelier. Underneath were two pairs of shining glass beads instead of his eyes. His tightly closed lips spread apart, revealing his white teeth.

No.

Having understood Linhardts vague words, Ed answered determinedly.

I know shell make it through.

Levi left behind the confrontation between the two of them and tidied up the rest of the patients clothes. The two men butting heads was a daily occurrence, so somewhere down the line, she stopped caring about it. Instead, Levi took a wet towel and wiped the patients face.

I dont even know her name, so I can only call her patient, Miss, or Visha. Shes very beautiful, even in the eyes of us Northerners who have a different standard of beauty than the people of the Empire. And she remains beautiful even though I can no longer find any traces of vitality in her after not having eaten proper food for nearly two months.

Levi muttered while wiping the unsuitable bloodstain from the frail-looking face.

What a terrible thing to happen to such a beautiful young girl. Seeing the way he looks after her, she appears to be a girl Edgar likes. But its clear that he cant even take care of her properly as he can be such a nasty guy

Dont belittle her. Shes stronger than anyone else.

..?

Levi looked back at the eerie voice. Ed, who had taken off his glasses, looked directly at her as if he had read her thoughts. There was no sign of blaming them for opposing the administration of Maltine in his sullen, glistening eyes, instead he had that look that screamed I was right in the end and his joy was evident.

I knew. Thats why I trusted her that she could persevere.

Edgar still seems to be in a state of excitement, hes been like that since walking back from the window. Apparently, this indescribable emotion continues to engulf him. Who would have thought that the patients awakening could stir his feelings

Even Levi, who expected Ed to reprimand her for not applying the anaesthetic incense on time, was confused and contemplated whether it was something she should cry or laugh about.

I knew it!

Now, instead of his glasses, Eds eyes flashed. Looking like he was about to do something, Levi hesitantly moved her steps toward Linhardt. As soon as she moved from bed, Ed strode across the room as if he had been waiting.

Hahahahaha!

A human bursting into laughter with his arms wide open wasnt normal for anyone to see. At first, the two, who were so astonished that they froze, didnt think of stopping Ed. It was only when Levi noticed that Ed was approaching the bed, that she became wary. But it was a bit too late.

Shes walking!

Ed whipped up the blanket and grabbed the patients foot. The action made Levi panic.

Hey!

Simultaneously with her shout, Linhardt turned around with his eyes closed. However, the completely unbothered Ed looked down at the soles of Lils feet with emotion, as if he had excavated a treasure.

This this is moving!

Linhardt, who almost saw the womans feet, asked Levi with a shudder.

Crazy bastard Why is he acting like that?

She sustained a wound that penetrated the middle of her body. He was most worried she might have injured her spine

So, she couldve been paralyzed?

Yeah.

Linhardt glanced disgustedly at Ed who looked like he could kiss the foot at any moment.

Ill vomit if I stay here any longer. Im going out.

Me me too. I dont like this either.

Linhardt was about to move forward when he suddenly stopped, looked back and gave a subtle sneer.

Rub it well.

..!

Eds laughing instantly stopped and his shoulders became noticeably stiff. Linhardt added some more with a sarcastic tone.

Didnt you say you wouldnt touch her apart from the purpose of therapy? Who was that jerk who said that he wont be doing anything for self-interest?

Levi paused too and murmured.

Oh? Come to think of it

You know what? Levi, I think you should stay, just in case

Embarrassed, Ed yelled, throwing the nightcap.

Get out!

Chapter 182

As Linhardt started to giggle, Levy pushed his back. When the two of them walked out of the room, their voices gradually faded away.

Ed stayed on his knees beside the bed for a while and at some point let go of Lils feet. Happy. He was obviously happy, but his joy was short-lived.

After carefully covering her with a blanket again, Ed sat in his usual chair and looked at Lil. His heartbeat which had been jumpy suddenly became muddy as if it had fallen into a swamp.

Its funny how Im feeling so despondent, constantly fluctuating between hopes and fears. And for what, Liloa will hate me anyway I cant forget the expression she made. Clearly gritting her teeth while she called me Admiral She seems to think of me as an Admiral who infiltrated the League. If thats true, it goes without saying that shell never look back on the good I did as Ed, the doctor of the Bell Rock. Instead, Eds existence to her will be nothing more than that of a traitor Then this peaceful and silent face will turn unbearably hateful Before that, I have to

Wake up. I havent forgiven you yet

No, the word forgiveness is still too shabby. Is forgiving you all that I want?

Ed wished to do more for Lil than that. He wanted to plead for her forgiveness too, confess, apologise, and clear up their misunderstanding, all the while pouring out his affection and begging her to look at him. He would endure whatever sacrifices he had to make in the process. It made no difference what Lil asked for or what he would lose Or whether Lil wanted him in the same way

Just get up, please.

In fact, it doesnt matter where you just went or what you just did as long as you woke up safely. If you thrust a knife into me, Ill be grateful for your arms ability to move again. And if you shoot me with contempt, Ill be grateful for the vividness of your eyesight. Even your curse words are something Ill gladly listen to.

Ed buried his face in the palms of his healthy and healed hands. It has been a long time since his left hand could function normally again. While Lil was dying, Ed was the one to recover from all his injuries. It was excruciating. He hadnt given Lil a chance yet, and Lil hadnt given him one either, but instead of hers, his wounds were already healing. Ed began to worry that in the end he would be fine while Lil would die. In such a case, he didnt think he would be able to start all over again.

His palms were filled with memories from his past; the immeasurable despair that has brought him to this point, the fear of never being able to face Lil again, the regret for not being a little more honest with her. Those torturous hours trampled over him one after the other. Only Lil could help him get back up. Nonetheless, he was anxious that it might end in vain.

If Liloa doesnt wake up, all those times will be meaningless

Eds body gradually collapsed. He was too tired to keep thinking about it. Still, he laughed. The end of his recollection seemed to have ended here today, and a hollow laugh flowed through his fingers.

No, Liloa will wake up. As early as the morning. And tomorrow morning, too. The world will greet her after a long time, and she will be welcomed by dazzling sunlight.

In the end, Ed knew that he had received a miracle. He no longer had to be afraid that they wouldnt get the chance to meet each other.

The tension that had been squeezing him for the past two months began to release. Meanwhile, the relief that crept in made his entire body drowsy. Ed didnt fight the sensation of being at ease. As his upper body fell forward, the warm and cosy bed accepted his body

Lil woke up due to the numbness in her legs. Her dull limbs didnt feel better even when she tossed and turned in her dreams. After opening her eyes, Lil lowered her gaze to the sleeping man sprawled beside her right leg.

Of course, I wouldnt be able to move them like this

Sleeping like a log, it didnt seem like a hindrance for him to have fallen face down from his chair, arms dangling over her legs. And though he appeared to be uncomfortable, he showed no signs of waking up.

Lil wanted to shake Ed off quickly, but she gave up on that because she didnt want to confront him yet. She was hungry and, more importantly, felt helpless. The muscles of her right arm were aching and sore as if swinging that sword earlier had already been too much for her.

I dont have the confidence that I can hold a sword with my left arm To be honest, in this state, I dont even know if Im able to hold a gun properly. If something happens here, I will be terribly helpless

Lil couldnt help but stare at Ed blankly. Dawn crept steeply across his cheek and the bridge of his nose. His hair, which had grown significantly since the last time she saw him, was dishevelled and scattered all over his forehead, ears, and eyes. Ed held a calm expression on his face, which had lost its distinctiveness. Now, without his uniform and just wearing a shirt, he looked more familiar to her.

Lil tried to shake off the emerging memories she has of him.

This man is the Admiral. However, I dont seem to get the memories of that night I fell asleep in his cabin out of my head. Although I was deceived from the start, I can never forget how he drew my face without knowing hed be abandoned the very next day. The suspicions I had about him since Amiaeng were right, but the wounds on his body remain the most vivid in my mind.

Lils breath was becoming more and more heavy.

I just cant accept it. The image of the admiral I had in mind was never like this. He was a maniac who cuts off peoples fingers and toes and collects scalps. Ive never thought hed be someone so familiar.

There were numerous reasons why she didnt expect Ed to be the admiral. In fact, Lil always thought that the admiral would look like someone from the Northern Continent. Northerners were genetically taller than the average central continental person, so Lil speculated that Admiral Retiro might be the same and even shared the universal features of bluish-pale skin, long black hair, and wide horizontal eyes.

However

Lil paid closer attention to Ed. His shoulders and back, which were constantly rising and falling, appeared relaxed. He looked the same as he did back in his cabin, so it was hard to associate him with the image of the admiral in her mind.

This is a scam. He cant be that man.

There wasnt an ounce of disappointment in herself for not noticing it before.

Admiral? How could I possibly have made such an assumption? An Admiral, which are only two of in this Empire, was flirting and playing a musical instrument on a pirate ship. Who couldve imagined such a thing?

Cesar, on the other hand, pretended to not know Ed from the start. Why was that? They trained at Lebrun and shared a squadron as junior officers. Cesar told me all of this without hesitation before. How come Cesar didnt recognize him after just a few measly years? Maybe, just maybe it couldve been possible that one party didnt recognise the other, but both thats highly unlikely right? Was there any sort of agreement or blackmail between the two?

Lil tried to shake her stiff neck.

I thought I knew Ed, but he has now become a stranger to me again I really dont know anymore. Back in Amiaeng, Ed, the Admiral himself, said he would answer all my questions about the Mondovi fleet in exchange for spending a night with him. He swore that he hated the admiral, pretended to hand over information, and even talked nonsense about signing a long-term contract with me! All the while knowing how anxious I was about the Mondovi fleet going south He knew everything about the League and still brought his fleet to the Bell Rock. Now*

It just means that all these messed up situations were no accident

Throughout his time being onboard the Bell Rock, Ed worked hard to please me. Im now ashamed at the thought of how I mustve looked like an idiot for almost falling for his lies. Why the hell did he do such a vicious thing? Because he wanted us to be together? Is he really going to say something like that? Then, will I be forced to forgive him for everything? He has been deceiving me for too long

The melancholy Lil suddenly felt the urge to kill him

Chapter 183

If only I could capture Ed and interrogate him. But thats nothing but a futile fantasy. This is Roahn. Its imperial land and land ruled by Ed at that. Its no exaggeration to say that Im sailing alone on an enemy ship. If I cause a commotion, there will be dozens of enlisted soldiers barging in. Besides, most of Roahns residents must be from the Navy or have connections to the Navy Damn Roahn. He governs this He rules here

As her mind was mercilessly disintegrating, Lil could only laugh in vain. She had never thought of Ed as someone who would be governing a place. All she thought was that he had to be a young lord of some fallen noble house with its own sob story. This realisation made her collapse helplessly.

A man of power. It wasnt enough for him to be an admiral, hes even a marquess

Lil was unbearably burdened. The sea and the land here were all Eds territory, so she didnt know how to start to fight against it.

The fear she felt when she first woke up and discovered Ed, strangled Lil with a tight grip. Unfortunately, it was impossible for her to run away.

Her crew were said to be in Gualtiero, but she didnt even know where Gualtiero was. All she knew was that it was known as The Vineyard. A bizarre nickname derived from the pirates heads that were cut off and hung in clusters, resembling grapes.

Its such an unforgiving place Maybe even my crew

Lil, who lost herself in terrible thoughts, closed her eyes tightly and let go of her imagination.

Such a prison is a place where the usual plan of simply entering and breaking the locks will surely not work.

Lil then thought of trying to get a blueprint.

I also have to secure a map. There must be a map of the territory in the study of this mansion. At the time when Gualtiero was built, the then-ruling marquess wouldve been involved. It will probably prove to be difficult to find blueprints from more than 50 years ago, but I think I can at least get my hands on some kind of useful information or maybe not

Lil realised she didnt even know the structure of this mansion or whether the blueprints were stored in the main building or an annexe.

There should be a study on the first floor, but I have no idea how to get there In addition, I cant do all of this alone. I have to involve people Can I blackmail Commodore Sagastar? Perhaps he might not have revealed my identity to Ed yet. Because if I had died, he wouldve been the one guilty of committing the heavy crime and I dont believe he would be naive enough to take such a risk. Unless hes a fool who wants to drag his family into ruin Hes probably worried sick and thinking of ways to cover this all up

But even Lil, who only briefly fought him, could tell that Sagastars loyalty to Ed was extraordinary. No other subordinate would try so desperately to protect his superior. While Lils identity might have been relatively unknown in the far south, Sagastar would be able to contact Lils hometown at any given moment.

What kind of woman would be able to intimidate by using her status? In any case, its enough for me to have survived for now. Once Im caught and dragged away, its over. Sagastar seems to be Admiral Retiros righthandman to the core.

Lils options plummeted.

Her stomach instinctively ached at the mere thought of Sagastar. Just how thinking about alcohol while having a hangover could trigger nausea, thinking about the man who injured her and caused her to lay sick in bed, made her body shiver. Lil involuntarily twitched before recalling that Ed was still lying by her leg.

As Ed tossed and turned, Lil abruptly shut her eyes. Ed, who had rubbed his head several times against the duvet, slowly raised himself. Afterwards, Lil heard the sound of a chair scratching. She breathed as naturally as possible, hoping she wouldnt break out in a cold sweat. Luckily, Lil had become pretty good at feigning her body was asleep. She didnt know if she had always managed to truly trick Cesar, or if she had the temperament of a trickster by nature, but because of her ability to breathe in calm and regular intervals, she easily mimicked sleeping.

Lil then felt that someone was staring at her. It was the feeling of the skin between her eyebrows being peeled off one by one. It bothered her. Her increasingly sensitive nerves rushed between her brows, and it was as though something sharp could dig into it at any moment. However, the moment she wondered if it would be better to open her eyes, she sensed Ed turning away.

Apparently, Ed didnt stay any longer. The sound of the door closing followed without him even trying to talk to her in order to wake her up. Lil then suspected that the throbbing between her eyes mightve been because her feet were numb instead of Ed having been staring at her.

Lil began to open her eyes. Even though she was in a dream-like state, she could sense whether or not there were people in the room. Lil felt relieved, noticing that the person, who had been with her in the room, was moving further away. After raising herself, she pulled the needle out of her arm. Her head became dizzy when she put her feet on the ground and stood up. Her stomach hurt too.

At this point, Lil couldn't tell anymore if the feeling of being ripped open was because of hunger or due to her injury.

I only know that the longer I stay here, the more dangerous it will be for me. I have already woken up twice, and Ed knows it too. I don't know what kinds of terrible things will happen in the future, so how can I calmly wait until morning in a situation like this?

Lets just take a look at the study. After that, I can try to negotiate with Ed in the morning, but I need to be prepared to infiltrate Gualtiero at any time. I also need to find a report that tells me in which section of the Port of Devito the Bell Rock is anchored. In any case, Ill be escaping at the same time as my crews escape, so I won't be able to free those sailors who fought the navy.

Lil walked to the desk in front of the window. The desk was cluttered with dozens of books and piles of paper. She looked around to see if they held any clues, but they were all medical books. The sight of it made Lil remember that Ed was a doctor and she couldn't help but suddenly think of him as one.

Ed might've been taking care of me who was seriously injured. I guess he may not be as harsh as I imagined

However, the growing sense of betrayal instantly calmed down her softened heart.

I can't let my emotions take over me. If it was just my life on the line, I wouldn't have minded being thrown in that prison, but as an unknown number of my crew is detained, I can't let myself be swayed by this sight of Ed. It might be a foolish choice, but having fallen for Ed's plan to gain my favour is even more unacceptable.

Lil opened the door and went out onto the terrace. Seeing that it was already dawn, she had to move before the servants got up. The autumn wind blew through her negligees. Mondovi, a region in the mid-latitude, was incomparably cooler than the south.

Lil carefully checked over the railing. Judging from the clear view of the Devito Harbour, Lil got a gauge that she was in the main building, more specifically on the second floor of the main building.

I don't see any enlisted men on guard, at least not below

Lil considered going over the terrace railing and down to the first floor. Within the time frame she had been given, she thought going this route would be better than wandering around inside without knowing the internal structure of the mansion. Making up her mind, Lil walked around the room looking for anything that might be of help. Fortunately, there was another sword stuck in the decoration above the fireplace. She had previously pulled out one of the two crossed swords, so the second one remained.

To get down, I need something I can use as a rope. And it needs to be long enough for me to reach the first floor and come back up again

Lil looked around with an unfamiliar feeling. When she lived on the Bell Rock, ropes were among the most common things she could easily grasp, so now she actually needed to think of what she could use as a replacement. After measuring the lengths of different materials, Lil decided to go with the blankets of her bed in the end.

The layers of autumn blankets were too heavy for Lil's physical condition. Resulting in Lil needing to put up with the blurring of her eyes several times. The gradually brightening dawn made her even

more nervous and impatient. Then, as she threw the blanket onto the terrace, her head spun. She landed down on the floor as if collapsing and groped for the hems of the blankets fabric. When finding the tips of the blankets, she tied them together with knots. Lil worked deliberately, but at one point, she raised her head upon hearing a faint sound

Chapter 184

It was a small, metallic sound. The repetitive vibrating sound rang at short intervals.

All the nerves in Lils body came on edge and goosebumps pierced her skin. She stiffly moved her eyes. From the fireplace on the left side of her view to the tea table and bed. When the small vibrations continued to bother her ears, her heart began to beat more wildly. As her gaze drifted further to the right, Lil held the hilt of the sword with her sweaty hand.

She suddenly stopped. She found it.

By the doorway, was a pitch-black vertical gap. Seeing that made Lils pounding heart sink instantly. She was shocked and confused about when exactly the door had been opened, but also certain of one thing. The golden-white doorknob was shaking with a shudder. As though someone was gripping it on the other side of the door.

Lil was barely able to get up. Even with the sword in front of her, her undiminished fear gnawed at her. She took a step. The marble floor felt unusually cold to the soles of her bare feet as she walked. A chill creeping up her legs gave her the shivers and the rest of her senses had gone numb.

Eventually, Lil reached the door.

W, who

The gap had neither further opened nor closed, giving her a false sense of hope.

There could be no one. Perhaps it was never fully closed when he left like that

But Lils eyes, which were now accustomed to the darkness, saw an obvious figure. It appeared like a person, that had been cut vertically, existed beyond the door. Its shattering breath slipped through the gap. Breathing slowly and steadily, as if enjoying her rapid breathing.

A muffled voice then whispered.

Where are you going?..

..!

It was a voice that Lil knew so well. She was devastated at being scared again.

What was I expecting, that there was some kind of ghost? I knew that behind this door was a man, and I knew exactly who he was

Lil couldnt be more embarrassed about the fact that she never realised that the door was open. It was the worst of all possible outcomes. Grabbing the doorknob, she instantly regretted not waiting for her senses to fully awake. The rotation of the handle had stopped at some point. When she pulled the door, the other person let go of the doorknob. Her vision, adapting to the shade, created a curve in the shape of a face. The darkness then further diluted and melted into that persons eyebrows and the bridge of his nose. After waiting a little longer, Lil was able to recognize his eyes.

Ed seemed to have been observing her for quite some time.

Continue what you've been doing. It looked fun.

His face remained motionless as only his lips moved. The man she once considered interesting was now terrifying. But even though he was threatening, Lil didn't want to give up and admit defeat yet.

I don't know since when he has been peeping, but those knotted blankets are still laying behind me. Even if I behave subserviently, the mere look of the situation will reveal my true intentions.

Lil gripped the hilt that was slipping in her sweat.

So, after all this, you haven't let go of your habit of voyeurism?

Shall I come in and see up close then?

The door opened without a sound, and Ed, who had been standing firm, suddenly walked in. Involuntarily, Lils grip on the hilt tightened some more. The man approaching her was much larger than she remembered, however Lil convinced herself to not back down.

Its just psychological pressure. All of this is a mental illusion.

Ed locked her inside by blocking the entrance without a chance to escape. He continued forward until the sword that rose between them touched his collar. Since it wasn't a long sword, they now weren't even an arms length apart. The fact that Ed was empty-handed provided Lil with no consolation at all.

At the residence of the Count of Amiaeng, he showed off his combat skills with his bare hands. It resulted in a fight where I had no choice but to suffer, not to mention my body was fine at that time. Then should I resist? What if I surrender?

Suddenly, the wrinkled frills of her dress tickled her ankle. It was then that Lil finally realised how she looked in his eyes. It didn't matter if her hair wasn't properly combed or tied. What mattered was the negligee she was wearing right now. The women's indoor wear that started at the collarbone and ended at the ankles. It was a plain, long-sleeved outfit that gave no other skin exposure, but it was still one piece. The only thing Lil wore was that. It overwhelmed her that she was a worn-out, pitiful woman in her pyjamas, standing in front of a man. Under normal circumstances, she would have felt less pathetic, but it was now unarguably clear that she couldn't even wield a sword properly.

Lil tried to figure out a way to escape Ed. However, after she had carried the pile of blankets, her body and head became hazy. A cold sweat broke out on her forehead, heated by tension, but quickly cooled down by the cold air coming in through the balcony doors.

What are you so worried about? If you want to stab me, go ahead and stab me.

Ed leaned over until the point of the sword caught his shirt. Lil found his action insane, but she didn't straighten her sword nor did she back down. She knew that the moment she was pushed back, there would be no stopping it.

I don't want to kill you in the middle of your residence.

Then run away.

What are you so hesitating about? You've already tried it once; why not try it again?

Then you should've let me run away on my own. Why did you even come in? Why did you get in the way?

You can run away as much as you like. I'll just go and find you again.

Lil was the first to show emotion. She had no choice but to do so. After all, she couldn't help but doubt what she just had heard.

What?

I don't know if you've realised it by now, but I have no intention of losing you again.

I realise what

It's going to be fun, right?

Madman.

But next time you'd better think it through though.

A warm breath spread across her forehead. Whether it was an illusion or not, it seemed that their faces were getting closer and closer. The point of her blade eventually began to pierce Ed's thin shirt. However, Lil still didn't budge. She had to and so she held the hilt firmly even after her fingernails became crushed by the force.

Back off.

It was boring to see you pretend to sleep.

Was I that obvious

How did you know

How did I know?!

As Ed yelled and abruptly came forward, Lil flinched back in surprise at the feeling of her sword digging into her opponent's flesh. At the same time, a sense of disappointment arose.

I lost.

When she realised it, Ed closed the gap between them.

At this rate, I will completely pierce his chest!

Her floundering feet were hastily pushed back. Because the space to hold her sword was narrow, she had no choice but to step backwards. In an instant, Ed snatched up her blade and yanked it as though he was about to pull it right out of her hands. When blood stained her blade, Lil reflexively released it. She had to, otherwise Ed's fingers would've been cut off. Having taken over the sword, Ed threw it away. The moment the blade flew and reflected the moonlight, Lil twisted her body in an attempt to escape. She knew that if she missed this opportunity, the desk behind her would eventually block her escape route. However, she wasn't sure whether her body would obey her thoughts. When she lowered her posture, a hand suddenly came down in front of her lowered eyes and grabbed the collar of her negligee. Lil instinctively grabbed his wrists, but because she didn't have enough strength to shrug him off, her body went up. Her body, which had been dragged up higher than her height, drooped down. Lil struggled uncontrollably. But the more she did, the more Ed pushed her back. Occasionally, a choking sound broke out like a cough while the hem of her

skirt hung up to her knees due to her clothes being grabbed. Between her struggling shins, his legs moved unhindered. Lil tried to put her legs back on the ground, even if it was only her tiptoes. However, the way she kept dangling in the air meant she had nowhere to step on

Chapter 185

When the weight of her body hit the desk, a pile of books fell to the floor. Lil was out of breath even though she wasn't really being choked. She struggled to get rid of Ed, but as she did he just gripped her collar with both hands. Ed easily dealt with her with one hand, let alone using two. In the end, Lil could only stare at him with an agonising gaze. His green eyes, which seemed to have lost their reason, showed clear signs of madness. Around his squirming pupils, the whites of Ed's eyes shimmered.

I listened to your breathing for two months! You didn't budge, even when I begged you to stop making me merely listen

Lil's toes barely touched the floor. Her feet struggled to find support and desperately climbed onto the spine of a book that had fallen to the floor.

So why did you pretend to be asleep?

But then, the book gave way and the cover was pushed aside. Her toes, which instantly lost their support again, curled up again.

In front of me?!

..!

Lil panickedly patted her hand on the desk behind her. Papers, books and more papers. Those were all that her fingertips could feel on the messy desk. However, her index finger suddenly pricked into something liquid-like and the rest of her fingers quickly then groped around it. It was a hard glass bottle.

Ink.

How much do I

You crazy bastard!

Lil swung her arm forward while holding the ink bottle. The dark liquid splashed on Ed, emitting a strong scent. Ed tapped on his cooled face and felt the poisonous ink. Lil took advantage of her opponent's confusion by breaking off his arm that was still holding her. His elbow twisted and she fell off. Lil quickly sat down on the desk and grabbed its corner tightly, she then extended her leg like a swing and kicked Ed in the side. However, her legs went numb right after.

Swallowing a groan, Lil quickly crawled across the desk to the other side. After she dropped to the floor, she stood up with difficulty. Now, between her and Ed was a wide desk blocking each other's path. Lil felt relieved to finally have some distance between them again even if it was for a short moment. She then grabbed her belly while she remained wary of her opponent.

Clearly annoyed, Ed raised his sleeve and wiped his face. Red water dripped from his chin and engulfed his white shirt. Although Lil expected it to be black ink, it was actually red. So when Ed raised his head again, his face looked like it was covered in blood. Half of it was smeared with dark red marks, making him look like a murderer who was eager to kill people. Turning his head, Ed spat

and a bloody mass fell to the ground. Judging from his reaction, Lil could tell that he was getting fed up. She found it already extremely difficult to handle him till now, but from here onwards, she couldnt even imagine how much more intense he would become. When faced with such anger, the shield called a desk was nothing more than a piece of wood where Ed could easily jump over at any given time. And right now, Ed looked like he could cross it without a moment of hesitation.

I think I understand what you mean.

By reacting neutrally, Lil tried to buy some time while she nervously sorted out the situation.

Eds angry because the person he tried so hard to save attempted to run away as soon as she woke up. He probably thought it ridiculous and disgusting that I tried to deceive him by pretending to be asleep, but he didnt know what to do with it Even if it wasnt my true intention, my deception has been misinterpreted and added more gas to an already burning pyre The reason why my action disturbed him was because hes heartbroken. Its surprisingly understandable. Ed is hurt. I can tell that he harbours some kind of emotion towards me, but that doesnt mean I will accept it. Once I let myself be swayed by the intensity of his emotions, Ill have no face to show to my crew. Ed can play as he pleases, but I cant afford to do that. Im responsible for the lives of my crew who are currently detained somewhere unknown. Besides, Eds offence cant be compared to mine which was just pretending to be asleep. Wasnt his deception way more grandiose?

Thank you for saving me. But I have no intention to accept you. Im so sick and tired of being tied down by acts of charity and favours. Please know that my feelings wont change.

Who said so?

Ed walked over with a sneer as Lil tossed the glass bottle she was holding onto the floor and the remaining ink spilt on it.

You were the one who deceived me from the beginning. What was it that you told me again? That you were a doctor who hated the Admiral and deserted his ship?

That sentence was as fatal to Lil as it was to Ed. It was a fact that gave no room for excuses and couldnt be denied no matter what Ed would do. To Lil, this was something that she couldnt afford to turn a blind eye to and her disposition about this would never be overturned.

The joy of seeing Ed again on the Visha passed by as if it were a sweet fantasy. At that time, Lil never thought, not even for a moment, that she would despair at seeing him again. She thought she would be happy at the unexpected reunion with Ed. But when he suddenly appeared as the admiral, she resented him so much that she almost couldnt bear it.

From the battle with the Bell Rock, which was only possible due to Eds position as the Admiral, to the situation in which he was suspected of being a spy because he was from the Navy, the fact that he didnt deny the message from the pigeon, and even the fact that he deceived me from the very beginning. Theres nothing there that I can tolerate.

When I asked how a mere navy doctor like you knew so much about military information, what did you say?

While walking narrowly and very keenly, Lils hatred grew. Her hands trembled. She wanted to rush in towards Ed and rip out everything. But instead of doing so, she recited exactly what Ed had said, word for word.

I had a close relationship with one of the Admirals aides, I have quite a wide foot! Hahahaha!

Laughing like a madman herself, her hair scattered everywhere and she could feel herself shaking.

That his closest aides name is Commodore Sagastar! What?! And that the Admiral is selfish and gives the Commodore a hard time by making him suffer? Dont you dare say you forgot! You said this with your own mouth! How could I What should I do now?! You had the nerve to grab me by the collar, huh? But, Im the one who wants to strangle your neck!

Lil couldnt forget. Eds testimony about the commodore was given when he was Lils perverted opponent in Amiaeng, and she believed him just like that. Everything that Ed said to win Lils trust by handing over some information about the fleet was brutally vivid. And like a pathetic fool, she listened to him without knowing a single thing.

Did you ever do anything other than deceiving me? Was there ever a time when you told me the truth?

Didnt you say that you trusted me?

Youre putting the blame on me?! Youre the one who didnt even protest!

I wouldve never let that naval message come in unless I was a complete idiot, but I guess you never thought about that. You were so blinded by the captain* that you never checked what he was doing And you wouldnt even listen to me.

Because you didnt say anything! Were you expecting me to beg you for an answer there? Where did you get the nerve to pretend to be hurt after deceiving me like that? You screwed it all up! Its all because of your fucking fraud!

Are you saying that you dont feel even just a bit of guilt? If you only think of me like that, then why Dont turn this to me. If you were planning on telling me the truth, you would have told me at some point.

Ed didnt confirm nor deny it, but Lil was certain.

When Ed realised his feelings and their sincerity, he was already caught too deep in his own web of lies. So Ed mustve started to regret it the moment he noticed that his schemes were irretrievable. He feared the consequences that came with not starting with the truth. But he shouldve known how dangerous a relationship built by lies is

Chapter 186

You must have actually considered telling me, there was definitely a moment of conflict in your head, right? But you didnt say anything! Not a single word, until it has come to this! So, whats it that you want me to realise? What are you up to? Do you want me to go as far as seeking you out and hearing your excuse? Is that it?

You didnt give me any chance to explain myself. You shot me.

Because you tried to catch the pigeon!

Oh. So, was shooting me to death the right thing to do then?

You tested me that morning in the cabin. You were going to get that message into your hands. Do you think I shot the ceiling because of my poor shooting skills?

Then should I say thank you for shooting the ceiling and not me?

Ahhh!

Lil waved her arms dejectedly.

What on earth were you expecting me to do? Should I have covered it up and trusted you blindly? Cut the bullshit! If you had just explained it properly, we wouldnt have gotten to this point. Were you happy that you got to twist the whole situation? That whole fucking mess mustve looked like a masterpiece to you, didnt it?

You abandoned me, who was nothing short of a corpse, in the arms of our benevolent Mother of All Things! Did the Western Pirates inspire you that much? Its their tradition of slaughtering people to the brink of death and then throwing them into the Mothers embrace!

Lil, stabbed where it stung the most, breathed in. She instantly remembered Eds bloodied face of that day.

It was the day that I never should have let Ed go

But it makes me wonder. Dont you think you were being punished for blowing countless opportunities?

Is that your idea of justice? You must be a very fair judge then. And a great one at that.

Lil looked back at that moment countless times. She regretted that she didnt raise her sword against Cesar, and even blamed herself for not jumping after Ed.

But he turned out to be the Admiral and came after me destroying the Bell RockI cant forget the Admirals bloody face on the Bell Rocks deck Now, I have a completely different kind of regret. That very day, I shouldve definitely killed Ed. Even when I thought Ed was dead, his deception continued. I never expected that he was following the Bell Rock with his fleet, while I lamented for him and accepted the fact that I would never be able to be forgivenThats why I cant even think of rejoicing about the fact that hes alive I shouldnt be happy that your life is continuing

Youre a cowardly bastard who cant even admit his mistakes. What happened was inevitable because you behaved like that.

You just didnt dare to refuse what your subordinates wanted, you wanted to play the role of being a noble judge, thinking you only had to turn away from me to achieve it.

Cut the crap! No matter how complicated the situation was, wasnt it basic instinct for the Bell Rock to know that we had to abandon anyone from the Navy? And then there are those irrespective things you said; like that you believe me or if I think youre special. Even asking me if Im in love with you? Its not even funny! If I had admitted to it, did you think I wouldnt be able to abandon you? That I was going to cover for you somehow? Instead, shouldnt you have told the truth about this crazy quest youve been on if you had the leisure time to think that way? In that case, I could at least have decided whether you were a spy or not! What a poor way of thinking you had! Im ashamed of everything I ever told you!

It was only natural for the Bell Rock to collapse because you chose to be a lover rather than a leader. If you cared so much about that ship, you shouldve noticed even the smallest signs of it collapsing. But, you couldnt go against the captain*, so you simply considered me a spy.

Who asked you to evaluate my qualities as a captain? Why dont you look at your own human qualities first? No human being should ever look down on other people. Youve been cheating me the whole time you were aboard, all the while telling me you were honoured to have met someone like me in this lifetime, and later on become angry at me for not trusting you fully. Is this what a decent person does to his fellow? What the hell did you take me for? Why did you treat me like that?!

Do you truly believe that we couldve avoided this outcome if I had told you the truth? What happened to the noble judge? Was she afraid of being suspected of unfaithfulness by the captain*? I had no idea that throwing me out there was your idea of proving your love for him?

You confessed! You, right in front of my eyes, told me that you leaked so much information to the Navy that you couldnt even remember! I wasnt even truly interrogating you. I was just standing there, waiting for you to come up with an excuse. I waited for you, you damn bastard!

Lil rushed forward, completely oblivious to the fact that she was actually trying to avoid Ed. When she closed in on him, Lil pushed him away, forgetting where she was, who she was, and who Ed was. Despite her lack of strength, the desk was moved by Eds size.

But you only kept your mouth shut! It was your choice to ruin everything. You shouldve held on to me from the moment the pigeon flew in and explained yourself, but you thought everything you had done to fool me wasnt enough. You stayed silent to test me and continued deceiving me till the very end!

Lil grabbed a handful of papers from the table next to her and threw them at him. As Ed swung his arm, the crumpled flagstick and ink splattered in all directions along with the papers.

I rather you had despised me openly! Instead you chased after me and did your best to come close to me only to stab me in the back in the end! No one has ever made me feel this small. No one! You laughed at my beliefs on the inside while praising them for being something you agree with on the outside! Youre the worst! You dont even deserve to be called a human! I thought you were the only one

who understands me Im disappointed because I thought you were the only one.

Lil, who couldnt stand that sentence, threw whatever she could get her hands on. She didnt even know at this point if Ed was dodging them, getting hit, or knocking them off.

I thought that it was the Bell Rock that had collapsed, but now I know it was actually me

She felt shattered, like a piece of wood broken by a cannonball, and she sank far too deep.

Suddenly, it was hard to breathe.

How could you

Out of breath, Lil grabbed her forehead. Her head felt dizzy. As she lowered her head, tears ran down her cheeks. She didnt even know when they had begun to flow. Her shoulders rose and fell uncontrollably, and her sobs leaked through gritted teeth as she was trying hard to control her breathing.

How could you do this

It wasnt until Lil repeated that sentence that she realised the ridiculousness of the situation.

Who am I crying in front of, and what am I complaining about? How could you do this? Admiral Retiro could do that. Hes a psychopath who couldve easily done this. To him, others are nothing but a toy. No one would be significant in his presence. And theres no denying that the man in front of me is that Admiral

Lil laughed silently.

What excuse do I want? What kind of excuse can he even use to erase the pain that has rooted in my heart? That he still has some lingering feelings? Is that what I want to hear? Its funny that Im still this pathetic even after coming back from the brink of death.

I can ask you the same thing.

Not paying Ed any attention anymore, Lil wiped her eyes with both hands. Her fingertips trembled, unclear if it was too much for her to bear the sadness or to hold back her laughter.

How could you have done that to me?

Ed, who came closer, turned Lil around. He grabbed her arms and thus removed the hands that covered her face. Because Lil still had little grip and muscle strength left, she resisted with her forearms right away, but she couldnt get away from Ed.

Why on earth

Perhaps because of the ink, his eyes looked red rather than green.

Why did you do that?

..!

The ink ran down his cheeks. Slowly, like bloody tears. Falling silently into the darkness. Ed was still buried in the pain of that time. It seemed that he couldnt control his mental wounds. It wasnt an exaggeration to say that his eyes had turned completely mad. They were the eyes of a man who had crawled out of the jaws of death.

Its my turn to question you now. Why didnt you even think of looking for me after locking me up?

Chapter 187

Ed no longer caught up with her, when Lil backed away from him with a stumbling step.

This is no laughing matter If I had gone to see him when he was in captivity, as he suggests, things mightve turned out differently. But Im getting sick and tired of imagining what would or could have happened if everything turned out to be just a simple misunderstanding. Ive been unconscious for a long time and have no idea what is going on with my head No, it seems like Im already going insane

Lil tightly shut her eyes. Even after reaching this catastrophe, pity and sympathy resided. She couldnt believe how this compassion was possible. Her urge to comfort Ed, who cried out that hed been hurt so much, and her desire to hold him, the man that was still standing in front of her after he had endured such a horrible time, fluttered in her tongue.

If I take the easy way out by embracing him and whispering to him that Im sorry, will his hatred towards me vanish? Who knows, maybe if he feels better, he might be willing enough to release my crew from Gualtiero?

Lil immediately dispelled those thoughts by swinging her head hard to drive away her weak delusions. She was ashamed of entertaining such ugly thoughts, even for just a moment.

Did I really think that wagging my tail would be enough to get my crew out of Gualtiero? I can no longer think straight when hes in front of me. He needs to leave or I need to get out of here, either way I need to get away from him Im so angry that Im losing my mind, and the thought of him betraying me is unbearable. But why do I keep

Do the interrogation you love so much in Gualtiero, not here. Where is Gualtiero anyway? Please bring me there, the thought of staying here any longer gives me the chills.

Ed tilted his head like he had just misheard something.

What?

For what crime are my sailors imprisoned?

Why am I the only one here? Id rather you send me there too. For the attempted murder of the admiral or something. I dont know why you took me here Perhaps because you wanted to hear something from me, but I wont utter a single thing that you wish to hear, actually, I have no intention of talking to you any longer. I wont be needing my necklace or anything else, so just bring me to my crew

Where did you say you wanted to go?

What? You dont like it? Then just cut off my neck and hang my head like a grape. You said it with your own mouth; Admiral Retiro is a madman enjoying such evil.

Lil crossed her arms as she watched his face hardening.

Whats wrong? Im offering myself for your infamous grape farming.

Perhaps because of her crossed arms, but Lil felt stuffy around her chest and the feeling of having her ribs squeezed hurt. Still, Lil managed to snort at Ed.

Is this year going to be a good harvest year?..

At that moment, the door suddenly opened and someone shouted from the hallway.

Oh my God!..

..?

Surprised, Lil turned her head. Ed, however, remained looking at her. By the door stood the woman she had seen by the staircase when she briefly went out. Lil squinted her eyes as the lantern the woman was holding was bright. The tall woman exclaimed.

Linhardt! Get in here quickly!..

A sleepy voice answered from further down the hallway.

Why are you telling me to come in there in the middle of the night?..

Oh, come on! We have to get him out

Frustrated, Ed glanced back at Levi and swept his face. As the red water ran down his jawline and dripped like blood, a voice flowed from under his palms.

Be quiet.

Levi firmly tugged at his chin and frowned at him.

Whats wrong with you?

Ed moved away and rubbed his face again. When a weary breath escaped, he dropped his hand and turned away without saying a word. At the same time, a man with a candle burst into the doorway shouting.

Whats with this bastards manner of talking to Levi? Huh?

Illuminated by the wildly flickering candle at the entrance, the shadow of a tall human fell over the door. Ed didnt respond to the accusation that was clearly directed at him. Instead, he just continued walking. His silent back made its way toward the door. When the distance between the two had diminished enough, Linhardt, the one holding the candlestick, opened his mouth in anger at Ed. He probably waited until Eds face became visible in the light, but as soon as it did he stiffened in astonishment and shut his mouth again. Meanwhile, Ed never stopped and his shadow passed through the door like he exited a shadowy stage.

Even though Ed had already disappeared into the hallway, Linhardt stayed nailed to his spot for a while before turning his head towards Lil.

Linhardts face, covered by the scarlet fire, only showed his twitching lip. Lil understood why he looked so shocked, as she had faced Eds bloody face quite a while herself, but when Linhardts gaze met hers, his blank black eyes gradually became sharper and more reproachful. Nervously, Lil was the first to turn away from the eyes that could seem to question her at any second.

I need to get out of this damn mansion. If I stay here any longer Ill go crazy for sure. It feels like Im still chasing Eds ghost, who had been abandoned somewhere in the Anatole Sea It will probably lead me to make some kind of irreversible mistake in one way or another. So, its better and more comforting to believe Ed died there. In addition, no one ever confuses the character with the person who plays it. My sympathy for Ed shouldnt be directed at the Admiral.

Lil kept getting the two of them mixed up and finally realised that she was going back and forth.

Excuse me..

Lil reflexively slapped the hand from her shoulder. When she turned around, the uninvited guests had not left yet.

No, its safer to say that Im the uninvited guest

As the other person seemed to be a resident of this mansion, Lil bowed her head at the strange woman.

Sorry for causing a fuss.

Lil didnt blame her rudeness when she slammed the door open in an obviously occupied room. She was being held custody in this house anyway, so she wasnt even in a position to complain about it.

You just woke up today, so please dont push yourself like that.

..!

As soon as Levi said that, Lils stomach reflectively tightened. The pain cut through her belly as if her partly healed flesh was being torn apart again. Lil put strength in her leg muscles to avoid showing any signs of pain, but she couldnt fool her opponents eyes. In the end, Levi supported Lil and led her back to the bed.

You shouldnt raise your voice like that because your blood circulation isnt back to normal yet, and you shouldnt move too violently because the pain relief has already begun to wear off.

Regardless of what happened between you and Edgar, you should go to bed for now. You really have to. Otherwise, I dont know when youll wake up next Be mindful of that the next time you guys fight.

If Im bound to lose my mind, I refuse to let it happen here. Ill get out of that gate even if I pass out or die the moment I step past it

Lil stubbornly resisted Levi. She found it pathetic to see herself struggling with a strange woman in the middle of the night, especially considering that her initial plan was to quickly retrieve her necklace and find the blueprints for Gualtiero.

But Lil was slowly losing strength in her body. At some point, Levi overpowered her without using any extra force. While Lil was being dragged along, she suddenly smelled something familiar.

This is

Anaesthesia incense

A scented candle had been lit and shone next to her bed.

Wasnt it out till now? No way

Lil glared at the woman in front of her eyes

Linhardtts cabinet2 was busy for breakfast.

Levi approached with a tray and sat down in front of him, who was drinking coffee. She spoke as she poured herself a cup as well.

Why was Visha like that?

I dont know.

Did you see the blanket she tied by the window to escape? What the hell, did Edgar kidnap her or something?

I dont know that either.

Oh my god I dont know if I heard it right, but I think she told Edgar to cut off her neck

Linhardt felt his head throb and touched his forehead. He eventually put down his coffee cup and threaded his arm through a sleeve of the waistcoat a servant held out.

Did you hear some more crazy things?

No, but isnt it suspicious that she tried to run away as soon as she woke up? She was obviously not feeling well.

Is there still a possibility of delirium?

I dont think it was like that this time. Usually, once a patient wakes up several times in shortening intervals, theyll regain full consciousness. Visha has already woken up a few times, and, above all, Edgars reaction wasnt one to be talking to someone delirious

Chapter 188

I see. I saw something similar when my uncle passed away.

Linhardt, who was wearing a justaucorps³, shrugged his shoulders. The blue velvet with silk suited him very well. Levi too got up from her seat and approached him. Even though the servant had finished the job neatly, she fumbled with his collar for no reason.

What was that?

Linhardt twirled his fingers in front of his face.

His face.

Was it that bad?

Hm, anyway, she said shed rather die, right? Why is that?

Whats with your tone

I dont like that woman.

Levi, who was tidying up Linhardts cravat, laughed out loud.

Ah, what? You met her once and you can already tell?

Now that were on the subject of parasites. The fact we have a second one really bothers me.

Aww, how cute.

When Levi pinched Linhardts cheek, his pale skin stretched like dough. The attendants glanced at Levi, who called a man over two metres tall cute. Unconcerned, Levi patted Linhardts chest and smiled brightly.

Dont worry. Ill find out whats going on. Shes a critically ill patient who needs to be monitored and taken care of anyway.

Levi hummed as she left the cabinet.

I like Visha. Very much

Lil stood in front of the mirror and burst out laughing.

Is this me?

She ran her hand over her cheek and squeezed it. She found herself so ugly that she thought that Ed shouldve been the one who was supposed to be afraid, not herself. She even felt embarrassed that she had been screaming at him while shaking her head like a madman. Lil touched the skin beneath her hollow eyes. The woman she saw in the mirror has sunken cheeks and a generally cranial face.

Lil then lifted her skinny arm and looked at it.

Thats why I was so helpless yesterday.

Lil clenched her fist and turned her wrist. Her eyes werent deceiving her, she truly hadnt any muscles left.

Looking at my current state, I mustve endured hell

Lil initially thought that it was amazing that she managed to survive. But when she remembered that her arms had the power of a mere rats tail and couldnt even shake Eds hand off, she groaned.

Damn it!

I have to get my body back quickly.

The maids shrugged their shoulders, terrified of the crazy-looking Lil. Her hair was still a mess, and the white negligee she was wearing was splattered with red ink from her scuffle at dawn.

Walking around, Lil spotted a tray and headed straight for it. Seeing Lil drink the soup straight from the bowl, the maid holding the tray trembled and quickly bowed her head. As the cold soup went in well, Lil swallowed it all and wiped her mouth with her sleeve when she was done.

Is there any meat?

Maybe they all thought that Lil was talking to herself, so the maid with her head lowered to the floor belatedly looked up. Then, when her eyes met Lils, she hurriedly lowered her eyes again as if she had seen a ghost.

But Miss Levi said that your diet

Who is Levi? And who is she to decide on my diet?

I think that will be me?..

Lil looked around in search of the owner of the intrusive voice. She was easy to spot because Levi was standing tall over the maids. Eventually, a woman with pale skin and black hair in a high ponytail walked into the room. Her round eyes, without double eyelids, smiled gently at Lil.

Lil shut her mouth for no apparent reason.

Perhaps because the Retiros are originally a Northern Continental family, but all the people who reside here are clearly from the North. They all have dark hair, blue eyes, pale bluish skin and long limbs. The imperials refer to them as people from the ghost-soaked tribes because they appear cold compared to the people of the Empire. And just in any other cases, the Empire unquestionably holds the world record for using childish racist terms.

As if the maids had been waiting for her, they quickly left the room upon Levis entrance. She looked really tall in her drab dress of apricot-coloured taffeta silk. Almost as tall as Ed. But on the Northern Continent, that height was the norm. Lil tilted her head and looked up at Levi, she then said hello when Levi greeted her first.

With Levi bowing her head, Lil became wary. After all, Levi was the one who put Lil to sleep last night with an anaesthetic incense. Lil instantly suspected that she mustve lit the same incense before talking to her. However, Levi merely put her arm gently on Lils arm, embarrassing Lil with the gentle action. And just as she did hours again, Levi guided Lil to the bed.

Lil sat down on the bed and looked at Levi, who was taking a seat across from her.

Im Levi Grits, Im a doctor. Edgar asked me to help you

A doctor?

Yes?

Lil asked back, wondering if she had heard it wrong.

What do you mean youre a doctor?

Levi had always been kind and gentle, but her eyebrows twitched upon hearing Lils question. And when she opened her eyes wide, her black pupils expanded even more.

Why, when a woman says shes a doctor, does that sound like nonsense? Do you think Im a bluffing midwife?

Its not like that.

Levis eyes softened at Lils immediate denial. She sighed and continued her words.

Im sorry I put you to bed yesterday. But if the pain had started again, it wouldve probably been unbearable for you. It was also crucial for your fever to break, else I wasnt sure when you would wake up next or if it left any damage to your head. I made the decision as a doctor, so please understand even if you felt uncomfortable.

Why is that

You have no idea what your condition is? What the hell did Edgar do after he woke you up?

What?

No, first of all, youre a critically ill patient who needs absolute rest. You woke up after being in a coma for more than a month and a half, so you shouldnt think of your body as your old one. Its actually more realistic to think of your body as a freshly awakened corpse. So, you have to be very careful with each step you take.

..?!

A freshly awakened corpse? Is she saying that if I take a wrong step, I could die again?

Youre the living witness of the fact that you are alive and moving, which in itself is a miracle, its even something that will be talked about for hundreds of years if reported to the academic world. Anyway, you should only eat food thats easy to digest for at least the next two or three days. Dont even dream about meat.

All right, I understand.

Lil replied calmly. If she said no, she would be ignoring a doctors opinion and that was something she didnt want to do. Shes already been rude to Levi once. So this time, Lil wanted to respect her occupation.

And I didnt think you were a midwife. Im sorry if it sounded that way.

Thats fine. You dont have to try so hard to be so polite to me either. My father doesnt have a title in the Empire. And thats how it works here, right? Im just a foreigner without a bloodline.

Okay.

So take it easy and relax. May I know your name?

Hearing that question, Lil suddenly realised that she was an unidentified woman here. With that, Lil assumed that both Sagastar and Ed mustve kept her identity to themselves, giving her the feeling she should do as well. But at the same time, she felt like she had to be courteous to her hostess Levi, who was elegantly dressed and took care of the maids with ease. However, there was no reason for Levi to be close to her.

What kind of situation am I in? Assuming that Levi might not know anything yet. From her point of view, my awkward response can easily be mistaken for a naive young lady who is unfamiliar with her surroundings.

Lil focused on her thoughts and unintentionally frowned. Whereas Lil looked like a person who was preparing for a bloody fight, Levi looked incredibly peaceful yet a little confused.

Levi asked cautiously, as though she had read Lils mind.

Why are you so wary?

Im not.

Is it because youre upset with Edgar?

What?

Its okay. Theres not a single person on Edgars side in this residence. Edgar, um should I call him a guest? Or even a parasite in this household? Its kind of like that.

Lil asked back at the absurd statement.

Isnt he the Marquess?

Linhardt is actually in charge of the manor affairs. So if Linhardt says Edgar is a parasite, then he is one.

Why

Ah. Well, when Edgar became an admiral, he had to detach himself from the residence for so long that Linhardt, who was only supposed to be responsible for the residences work and the governors office, ended up managing the rest of the territory as well.

Then who is Linhardt? Is he the governor of Roahn?

Chapter 189

Linhardt Eichendorff. Hes Edgar Eichendorffs cousin. Edgar uses the surname Retiro within the Empire, but here we just call him by his original name Anyway, normally his Majesty the Emperor personally dispatches governors to take care of local administration when the lords are unable to manage the lands, as it was in Edgars case, so its kind of funny that Edgars cousin actually became the governor of this region.

Thats what shes saying, but its hard to really believe it. The Marquess is being treated as a parasite in his own house? Should I really simply accept that and stay here comfortably?

Lil became lost in her thoughts, paying no mind to Levi who had begun preparations to draw her blood.

Apparently, Sagastar didnt reveal that Im Liloa, and it also seems that Ed kept silent about me being a pirate captain. So, are or arent my crew being held as pirates? Or is it just that Levi is oblivious to the operations of the Navy? But didnt she seem quite close to Ed?

Linhardt is Edgars only friend. So please be nice to Linhardt even if you dont feel like trusting him.

While talking, Levi shook her head a few times. She then continued explaining the situation in the residence without any signs of suspecting Lil.

Now, its time to move rooms. This is actually just a boudoir* next to the laboratory, well go up to the third floor soon.

The Admiral No, where is Ed now?

Ed? Edgar? Well, I guess hes in his cabinet? Or library? Or perhaps hes stuck in the music room. Oh! If hes in the music room, then he must be feeling down. Edgar can be stuck there all day when hes feeling depressed.

..?

Lil wondered whether or not to doubt the information she received so easily.

Doesnt this doctor know what I could do to this residences lord if she gives me information about his whereabouts just like that?

Ah. He may perhaps be taking a bath. He enjoys hiding himself alone in there as well. But no one can enter Oh well, yes, you may go in of course.

What?

Yes?

..?

Lil couldnt understand why Levi thought she could simply barge into Eds bathroom. However, seeing Lils stunned face, Levi became much more flustered than her, causing her to eventually shout loudly.

Arent you like a couple?!

..!

Lil barely held herself back from screaming. Even though to her, it was nothing more than a ghost story that was as good as nonsense, Lil couldnt remain calm at all and she embarrassedly touched her hot face.

Oh, my God! Are you sure you two arent in that kind of relationship? I thought you were at least lovers? So earlier at dawn, that wasnt a lovers spat? It was just a normal fight?

Levi immediately grabbed Lils hand and asked worriedly.

Are you kidnapped?

..!

What is this, what kind of misunderstanding is this?!

Lil awkwardly shook her head.

I dont know what the hell this woman is thinking, but its not!

However, Levi didnt seem to buy Lils passive denial. Lil quickly calmed herself down. She then attempted to determine her situation and come up with a good response, but Levi was rather eager to answer herself.

No, this madman! Do you need me to send a message to your family?

Oh god, what did he do?! This is so so crazy! Really! Where are you from? I need to call someone right away!

Levi paced back and forth in front of the bed.

Is this attitude of being apologetic, as though shes ashamed of her familys faults, a play or sincere? If its a play, I need to see through it. And if its sincere, I have to take advantage of it. The only reason why I stayed at this mansion until now is so I can obtain the blueprints for Gualtiero.

Its all right. You dont have to send a message to anyone.

Oh, is that so? Thats a relief then. I was so surprised.

By the way, can my body handle going outside of the residence? Like in my current state, would I be able to move by myself?

Of course, I couldve lied about sending a message to my family. If I used that excuse, I perhaps could go out. The only concern is that for some reason, it seems that Doctor Levi will misinterpret my words as an excuse to leave. Wording it like this, I now feel like shes going to give me an answer from a doctors standpoint, probably, telling me something like doing indoor exercises instead because Im not in good shape

Well, if its a walk in the garden, its worth trying. But you cant simply go outside. You need a carriage to leave the grounds and I cant allow you to do that yet. You need to make sure that youre absolutely stable for at least two weeks, okay?

Your silence means it sucks, right? Okay, ten days then.

Oh hm, its hard to concede more. Anything more than that could result in something bad and we wont want that Uhm, dont you think so too?

Levi, who was pretending to soothe Lil, raised her head even though her patient wasnt complaining. Just as she was about to give the injection, she quietly rolled her eyes.

Then do you want to escape by any chance? Is there a place you need to contact? Have you been threatened by Edgar? If so, would you like to secretly write something behind his back?

Lil eventually recognized that Levis black eyes were only filled with pure innocence.

If I had been a man, I would either be considered an ally or an enemy, but in both cases, a suspicious person nonetheless, however, at the end of day a woman is only a woman. And a woman could never be a threat to Ed Thats probably the basis for Levis naive trust.

Having realised that, Lil pretended to break down and played on Levis thoughts.

No. Its fine.

Levi wasnt convinced at all and muttered to herself.

Is she really not kidnapped?..

From her expression, Levi was clearly wondering if she should intervene. But instead of pushing it, she tilted her head and drew Lils blood before eventually removing the needle. Only after that was done did she open her mouth again.

No matter how I look at it, you dont look too happy being here do you feel bad about being involved with Edgar? Something like that never occurred to me due to the things he did when you were in a coma

Yesterday was the first time in a while that Edgar slept well. Over the course of the past few months, he has worked himself to the point of exhaustion. But when I came to check on him last night, he slept so soundly that he didnt even wake up.

Levi placed a piece of cotton on the inside of Lils elbow. Lil, who didnt want to hear about Eds circumstances, pressed it hard for no reason, somewhat hoping that the pain would distract her.

I may already be a doctor, but Im still in the middle of completing advanced medicine at the Imperial Clairaut What I mean is, under normal circumstances I wouldve been in the professors lab. But not too long ago, Linhardt called me to Roahn, saying that Edgar was likely to die if he continued at this rate. He told me that Edgar didnt sleep and refused to come out of his laboratory.

Levi rose from her seat and approached the desk. As Lil had had a peek at the content on top of it, she had a vague guess of where this was going. That premonition was confirmed when Levi picked up something like a small booklet from a pile of books. Lil had seen similar notebooks on the Bell Rock, making uneasiness settle in her heart combined with the feeling of indigestion.

Levi opened the notebook and placed it on Lils lap.

With that temper of his, theres no way he would entrust this to someone else. Actually, he barely handed it over to me when I arrived.

[Body temperature measurement every 30 minutes, posture change every 2 hours, splints on wrists and ankles checking for replacement or signs of skin injuries -, eye cleaning every 4 hours, oral and nasal cavity care every 2 hours, dietary injection 3 times]

Edgar will be angry with me if he finds out about this, but I think you need to understand why he couldnt sleep. A coma patient is extremely weak and vulnerable. If ones eyes arent taken care of, they can go blind, and if their limbs arent stimulated regularly, they might not be able to use their joints properly when they wake up Normally, he didnt have to go this far, but because the fleet didnt have any equipment, I guess he had to check everything one by one. There was no medicine onboard either, so he probably wanted to prevent complications before they happened. However, even considering that, this level of meticulousness is closer to obsessiveness.

The notes, that were written every half hour, filled twenty-four hours without fail. No matter how many pages Lil turned over, every day was the same. While flipping through the notes about her insignificant body, Lil wasn't sure what her own expression looked like right now.

Eventually, the cotton ball fell from her arm and rolled down the bed.

Ever since I took over nursing you, Edgar has been completely focused on your full recovery. You see, statistically speaking, patients who have been in a coma for over a hundred days, show clear signs of brain failure when they wake up. If that happens, patients are officially still alive, but can't really live anymore. Of course, it's a meagre statistic, but we can't afford to ignore it. That's why we hoped you would wake up within 4 weeks. Because after that, the possibility of irreversible damage increases steeply. It had been a race against the clock as it was crucial to provide the correct prescription as soon as possible.

Chapter 190

Levi pointed over Lil's shoulder. Without looking, Lil immediately knew what she was talking about. It were those bizarre-looking instruments that got her startled that night. Medical tools consisted of a thin glass tube that was tangled like a thread in all kinds of random ways resting on a wide wooden support with delicately crafted porcelain suspended for an unknown purpose. In addition to all that, was the equipment to the side at the size of a cembalo.

Edgar was extremely impatient. After all, no one is more impoverished than a man whose pressed for time. No, in this case, it's safe to say that time had already passed. How exhausting must it have been to be constantly chasing it. Nerve-racking as well, not knowing what was going to happen next. So, when he eventually came up with that prescription to administer to you, I thought he had finally lost his mind and started to talk nonsense.

Maltine is a drug no different from poison even when given to a healthy person, let alone its been given to a person in a coma. Hair loss and muscle stiffness are common side effects, among many others. Nonetheless, Edgar asserted that it was the only drug that would be successful and provided an example of someone who underwent a very aggressive therapy. However, even the doctor from that case estimated the success rate at only one out of ten. Edgar claimed that a valid analysis was performed, but I couldn't believe it as I hadn't witnessed the process.

Levi sighed and wiped her forehead as though she were wiping sweat. She then pressed her temples and continued her words.

I tried to stop him, and so did Linhardt. I objected as a doctor and Linhardt told Edgar not to play with people's lives. That people weren't test subjects, and that he shouldn't act arrogant just because he knew how to cut and stitch your belly. But Edgar was adamant and responded by saying that you should be able to retain your higher thinking skills, that you still need to know how to put your thoughts into words. He convinced us that time was the most important thing and that it was crucial for you to wake up as soon as possible. I finally understood where he was coming from. You see, aphasia* is a typical aftereffect of a coma patient.

The notebook slipped because Lil could no longer bear its weight. Lil glared at the booklet that had fallen from her hand and was pressed down heavily on her lap.

I can't remember everything because we were screaming and talking nonsense at each other at the time. But the gist of it was that you should be able to think and read until the day you die. Edgar

stated that this wasn't coming from him, but that he was sure that this was what you would've wanted the most, and for that, you would be able to endure it well. He then sat next to you, who was unconscious, and explained in great detail that you should stay strong because he would be administering medicine to you and treating you in this manner. Back then, I felt like I was seeing the birth of a real madman

Lil's eyelids trembled no matter how hard she fought against it. Her fever seemed to be rising again. Lil clenched her fists to stifle her body's heat.

This must be because I'm not fully well yet.

Finally, I ended up administering the Maltine, and this is the result.

Levi's finger pointed to Lil's knee.

This journal that you just read*, you understand the meaning behind it and can tell it's filled with melancholy, right?

It means Edgar really succeeded.

Lil's hands and feet, which she may not have been able to move again had the outcome been different, trembled uneasily while her head, which she might've never used again, threw itself into the past.

What if I lost my ability to read? I can't even imagine not being able to read this book

Her fingertips trembled at the belated shock. Lil thought back to the moment when she had no choice but to accept Sagastar's dagger. Suddenly, she clearly remembered the sound of the blade penetrating her body and the pain that came with it. Followed by the sensation of death, the piercing of her flesh, the tearing of her intestines and the dislocating of her bones

The doctor's pale hand rested on Lil's trembling hand. Lil was ashamed to be caught like this, but she had nowhere to escape to. With Levi above her and the journal below, she was stuck.

So that's how I came to think that way, that you guys must be together. Edgar never said who you were, but how could I think otherwise? He cared so much about you. No, that might even be an understatement. Perhaps I only thought I knew. But, why else would he want you to retain the ability to read books, think, and speak?

Startled, Lil raised her head like someone caught off guard. When their eyes met, Levi smiled softly. The expression on Levi's face told Lil that she knew.

Actually, I came by early at dawn to change the anaesthetic incense, that's how I came to overhear your conversation when standing outside. When you said you'd rather die, I had no choice but to interrupt out of the fear that Edgar would lose his sanity. I'm telling you this in secret, but I truly thought that Edgar would become so vulnerable in that situation. However, later in the morning, when I mulled it over, I realised that I never heard your side of the story. Edgar did a lot of strange things, so I was worried that he might've done something without your consent. That's why I asked.

Levi rose from her seat and gently patted Lil on the back.

But that's enough for now. You don't have to answer.

Levi then gave Lil a handkerchief. Lil instantly felt the need to hold on to something, so she squeezed the little piece of cloth tightly.

The treatment isn't finished yet but I'll step out to give you some space. Call for me again later.

When Levi walked away from her seat, sunrays shot straight down on Lil. Her eyelids flinched at the sudden bright light and droplets of water shortly carried by the wind dripped onto the back of her hand. Lil lifted the handkerchief to wipe away the puddle filled with sunlight that had formed in her eyes.

From the moment I awoke, I failed to recognise the possibility that I could've stayed unconscious indefinitely. I literally died and came back to life

Lil slowly wiped the back of her hand and experienced the sensation of feeling the handkerchief. The sense that had been blocked for nearly two months was strangely vivid.

I've had several near-death experiences, but this is different. I've dodged a lot of swords and daggers in order to stay alive as I always had this premonition that the moment I would get stabbed, it would be over for me. That's why I never had the guts to expose my bare body beneath the blade like that. Besides, I never imagined that, when I eventually accepted the fact that I would die, I could actually survive, but at the cost of ending up losing most of my physical and mental functions. Losing the ability to think is truly beyond comprehension, but for now, I can only feel relieved that that loss is only part of my imagination.

Lil swept through her unkempt hair. Tresses of hair filled her bony hand.

She had thought that her weakened state was caused by her inability to eat properly over an extended period of time, but now she understood that it was all due to the drug.

Was it the poison that made my entire body ache with a feeling of tearing apart when I woke up? Was that poison really what saved my life?

Lil looked back at that moment.

Ed had appeared dangerous in the eyes of my freshly awakened mind, especially when he threatened me with his harsh remarks. As a result, I, how foolish as it may be, couldn't bring myself to ask anything about him or what he'd done to me. To me, Ed was enraged and nothing more than an unknown admiral with a slew of horror stories. I was afraid of what a man, who can't relate or sympathise with others, would do to me. But today, Levi shared something completely different.

It made Lil ponder over what Ed had told Levi.

{ that you should be able to think and read until the day you die }

It's unexpected, but nothing more than an old trick I've been through before. He's trying to make me feel understood, acting like he's my salvation, only to bind me to him in the end.

Lil was annoyed by the fact that she was starting to get emotional.

This time as well I know that I'm only going to deceive myself the moment I allow my vulnerabilities to be soothed.