

For Your Failed Unrequited Love

#Chapter 31 - Read For Your Failed Unrequited Love Chapter 31

Chapter 31

Watching them only pained him further.

After a while, Felix put the book that he had opened into his bag. Having packed all his things, he tried not to look at the two as much as possible and left.

Lucy sensed Felix walking behind her and turned to look at him.

I

Felix heard Lucy, but he did not stop walking. His steps were urgent as he left the library as if he was on the run. Running away from Lucy and Adrians close friendship.

No, from his own pathetic jealousy when he looked at them.

From the very beginning, he knew who was in Lucys heart, and it was his head that was in disarray.

First, he went to Literature Night and was overly conscious of her, then he asked her to go to town together, and now, he asked her to study together for the exam.

All of them happened because of him. He didnt have to be upset with Lucy or be mean to Adrian just because she didnt choose him.

Its all my fault, he murmured, scratching his head.

Lets not be pathetic anymore.

Sunbae!

Someone pulled hard at the hem of his clothes, and Felix looked back in astonishment. Lucy was holding the hem of his shirt, breathing heavily.

Lucy.

She had hurried after Felix, bending over and looking up at him, catching her breath.

Well

Contrary to her pursuit, Lucy could not easily open her mouth. Her eyes were shaking greatly.

Felix's eyes glittered with hope for a moment. He had run away from seeing how close Lucy and Adrian were, but when he saw her coming after him, uncontrollable greed and anticipation soared within him.

Come on. Say it. Say, Don't worry about Adrian. In fact, I have no feelings for him.

Felix looked at Lucy anxiously, knowing that she would never say those words.

Lucy, who was catching her breath, finally opened her mouth. If you need any books, please let me know. I've found some books that will help you.

Oh.

Her words left Felix speechless.

What did I expect?

He laughed at how ridiculous he was being.

It's all right, he replied. I haven't finished reading everything you gave me last time.

Yeah, she wouldn't say that.

Lucy caught him one more time as Felix turned away, now resigned.

Sunbae, are you going to the room next week? Her face was filled with worries. Her hand holding the hem of his clothes seemed to tremble slightly.

At the same time, sadness also appeared on Felix's face.

Why do you ask me that? Why are you pretending to care about me with that look on your face? It's Adrian who you really like, not me.

Felix's judgment was strangely twisted. He wanted to complain to her like a child. He raised his head in the hope that she would be hurt as much as he was.

Not surprising that he had such a childish side, Felix uttered an irrevocable remark. I'm sorry. I'll just prepare for the exam by myself.

What? Lucy's face was contorted with confusion and disappointment. Why all of a sudden.

She wanted to ask, her face blank, but her words were drowned by the loud, oncoming chatters of people.

A group of third-year students from a nearby building were walking their way. One of them waved when he saw Felix.

Adrian! You said you were going to the library.

I think that's Felix. Someone from the crowd intervened. It was Claire Hamilton, a third-year female student. She looked at Lucy standing with Felix with a strange smile on her face. It's the junior from that time.

Claire remembered what she had encountered in the garden over the weekend. Even the other students glanced at Lucy curiously at her words.

As their attention was suddenly focused on her, Lucy stepped back, avoiding their gaze. Her face flushed in embarrassment.

Felix took a step forward as if he were hiding Lucy behind him. However, before he could bring up anything to distract the students, Claire said, You've been together a lot lately. You two seem to be very close.

Claire stared directly at Lucy, and some of the students even exchanged silent glances with each other. Felix could fully guess the meaning behind those eyes. It was obvious that Lucy would be badly affected.

What's with her? One of the boys asked while looking at the expressions of the other students. Then, feeling puzzled, he immediately asked Felix a question, What? Are you going out with her?

What are you talking about? Why would I? An answer came out of Felix's mouth immediately. He had a strong desire to protect Lucy from unnecessary interest and rumors.

However, only after Felix said those words, he realized it was an overreaction. Lucy might have been hurt. He closed his eyes tightly before opening them, then swung around to cover the situation.

She's from the library, but she mistook me for Adrian and followed me.

The boy who asked the question shrugged at Felix's explanation. He looked as if he had expected it. Well, there's no way you'd date someone not on your level, the boy said bitterly, almost in a sneer.

What?

Felix went numb as if he had been slapped hard in the face. He could hear Lucys breath hitched from behind him, but he couldnt bear to look back. When he thought about how Lucy would feel and how she would look, his whole body went cold.

Felix froze; anger came to him a second later when he realized he didnt imagine the boys insult. He raised his hand, but a breeze blew by him before he could grab the boy by the collar.

Lucy, standing behind Felix, hurried past him and the other students with her head down.

Lucy! Felix pushed the other students away and went after her.

Please dont follow me, Lucy spat out without even looking at Felix. He stopped in his tracks and couldnt follow because he felt the misery in her choked voice.

Hey, Felix! Someone grabbed him by the shoulder. It was the boy from before. He held Felix back, still laughing at Lucy, who was walking away. What are you doing? This is not like you. Anyway, all those girls who approached you Ack!

He couldnt finish his words and fell to the floor. Felix straightened his body after landing his fist on the boys face.

The other students gasped back at the sudden punch. They all looked surprised.

Felix has never hit anyone, no matter how agitated he was, and now no one knew how to deal with the situation.

Whats with that girl? The look in their eyes seemed to be saying so.

Felix!

The beaten boy looked up at Felix, stopping the blood flowing from his nose. However, he could not speak anymore because of Felixs cold expression as he stared at him. He then lowered his eyes.

Felixs agitation did not subside with just one punch. However, just as he was about to grab the male student by the collar and pull him up at any moment, something came to his mind and stopped him.

Sunbae

Lucy in his dream was pale, standing beside his father.

When the figure came to mind, a chill ran down Felixs spine. He didnt think it would be good for Lucy if he caused more trouble.

He walked away from the crowd of students staring at him, their eyes wide. He looked for Lucy as he walked, but he couldn't see her. He felt that something had gone wrong and was nauseous.

I have to tell you. That's not what I meant.

Felix's pace accelerated. Arriving in front of the library instantly, he entered without hesitation. He strutted up to the return table and looked around, but Lucy wasn't there. The same was true for Adrian.

He leaned his upper body inward with his hand on the return stand. They were not there either. There was only one book club member, someone he had never seen before.

Where's Lucy? Felix strode up and asked.

The book club member was puzzled and said, What? I just took her shift, and then she went out with Adrian.

Adrian.

Felix ran out of the library without letting the book club member finish talking.

He searched every inch of the Academy for Lucy. Classrooms, corridors, cafeteria and gardens. But he couldn't find her anywhere.

As if she was hiding from him.

He had never felt this desperate in his life.

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In the end, Felix returned to the dormitory. He couldn't find Lucy and it was already evening. The corner of the sky was dyed red by the sunset.

Felix trudged up the red dormitory stairs in a miserable mood. He stood in front of the door and leaned against it.

Don't keep avoiding me like this.

His anxiety grew.

When he opened the door, the first thing he saw was Adrian sitting on the sofa. And soon as he saw the face of the man sitting with him, Felix halted in his steps.

What are you doing here? Felix asked, incredulous.

Noel rose from his seat as he looked at him. Sunbae, youre here, he greeted casually as if he had been waiting for Felix.

He looked the same with his curly hair and fair skin, but somehow his usual cheerful and lively demeanor was more subdued, calmer.

Before they continue with the conversation, Felix raised his eyebrows when he noticed another figure sitting opposite Adrian and Noel. The man, whose back was facing Felix, hesitantly rose to his feet. He slowly turned toward Felix, his eyes looking around.

You! Felix cried, pointing at him.

With his long bang covering his eyes and shoulders slumped over, it was the suspicious boy who was following Lucy secretly.

Who are you?

Just as Felix strode toward him, Adrian hurried out to stop him. Felix,

Wait, Felix-sunbae! Noel quickly approached him, too.

Why is he here? Why are you here? Felix asked, glaring at Adrian and Noel.

Felix's fierce momentum made the suspicious boy's knees buckle and he fell to the floor.

Just calm down and sit.

What do you mean calm? That guy is Lucys stalker.

Stalker? Adrian asked, puzzled. I dont know what you mean, but Eric came to apologize to you today.

Apologize? Felix's eyes narrowed at the unexpected remark.

Adrian explained as he sat him on the sofa. Hes Eric Roman, a sophomore. He pointed at the boy with his chin. The one who took your uniform at the training ground.

Felix sprang up from his seat.

Eric Roman shivered and shrank back in fear behind Noel. His face was as pale as when he saw Felix and ran away in surprise.

I told you to sit down. Adrian pulled Felix, who was ready to jump in at once and made him sit down. Adrian patted Felix on the back as if he were trying to solve the situation.

First of all, your uniform is fine. Here. Adrian picked up the uniform that was placed next to him and handed it to Felix. I dont know why its so important to you. It looks the same as the other school uniforms in your closet

Felix ignored Adrians mumbling and accepted the uniform coldly. He shoved his hand into the pocket of his trousers and started looking for the allergy medicine. The tip of his fingers touched a small, round vial.

The medicine was safe.

Felix closed his eyes and heaved out a sigh of relief before opening them again.

Im sorry, Felix-sunbaenim! Eric Roman suddenly knelt on the floor. He put his hands together and bowed his head like he was praying. Someone said that if you take the exam wearing the top students uniform, youll get a perfect score So I thought it was Adrian-sunbaenims uniform, so I took it Im sorry. Im so sorry

Felix, who had once been furious when his allergy medication was gone, leaned back on the sofa and smirked. When he heard the ridiculous reason that he had already guessed, his whole body seemed to lose strength.

stealing the clothes of a man who was showering?

Eric regrets it a lot. Noel, who had been watching the situation in silence, intervened. He was depressed when he found out that the uniform was not Adrian-sunbaes, but Felix-sunbaes.

He covered his mouth with one hand so that only Felix could see it, and said quietly, When I told him that you were at the bottom of the grade, he was very disappointed.

You bastard. Felix reached for Noels collar, but he quickly avoided it. He hid behind Adrians back and peeped at Felix.

Why are you here? Did you steal my stuff, too?

No, its not that Noel hesitated for a moment, then said, Eric is my older brother.

What?

Yes, were brothers. We dont look alike, right?

Felix looked at Noel and Eric alternately with suspicion. As Noel said, the two looked so different that he couldnt believe they were siblings. Noel had curly brown hair and was good-looking while Eric had dark straight hair and an average appearance.

No matter how much he looked at them, He couldnt find anything in common.

when I heard Sunbaes uniform had been stolen in the classroom, I immediately knew that it was Eric who had done it. Im sure my foolish brother is the only one in the Academy who would do such a reckless thing for his grade, Noel continued, Of course, I asked my brother right away, and he told me the truth. He did steal a Bergs uniform.

Noel patted his chin as if wondering whether he should talk about it or not, and immediately opened his mouth. Eric has been in second place since he entered the Academy. However, my parents were not satisfied because their expectations for my brother were so high. They wanted him to be the Top student, not second place. But you already know who the sophomores top student is.

Noel looked at Felix and shrugged his shoulders. Its Lucy, no matter how hard he tries, he cant beat Lucy. So, he felt pressured. But as soon as I found out about it, I persuaded my brother to return it.

Then why did you come now?

Well, I wanted to bring my brother right away and apologize. You said youd crush the wrist of the person who stole it

At Noels words, Eric, who had been trembling as he knelt down on his knees, turned pale. He made a strange noise and bowed his head to the floor.

I Im sorry! he apologized repeatedly. I didnt have the courage to return it Please dont crush my wrist Eric even cried.

Felix sighed and put his hand on his throbbing head.

Is this guy really the second in his grade?

He didnt understand at all how he thought of competing with Lucy with this mentality.

Anyway, thats why Noel came to see me first yesterday. Adrian helped Eric, who had begun to shed tears, and sat him down on the sofa. He showed me your uniform and told me the truth. and he wanted to ask you for forgiveness, but you seemed very angry, so he asked me to help him, so I called him here.

The more he heard about it, the more he was amazed. Felix looked at the two brothers across from him pitifully.

Noel, who was gently watching Felixs countenance said, Anyway, Im very sorry for the trouble my brother has caused you and Lucy-sunbae. Im really ashamed of him. Noel grabbed Eric, who couldnt stop crying and made him stand and lower his head.

But Felix suddenly raised his head at Noels words.

Lucy? he asked, raising one eyebrow. What about Lucy?

you heard it too back then, the thing that Lucy-sunbae had in her bag disappeared.

What?

Eric took it too. He went to Adrian earlier and gave it back to him.

what was missing?

A necklace,

Necklace? What necklace?

Just a crystal necklace.

What kind of crystal?

Felix continued with his questioning but Adrian intervened. Its just a common crystal necklace. You saw it on my bed last night.

At Adrians words, Felix looked back and asked, Didnt you get it as a present from Lucy?

What? no? I just got it from Noel and kept it for a while, Adrian explained.

Noel, who was listening to the conversation, tilted his head. Huh? He approached Felix and whispered quietly, Felix-sunbae, dont you get it?

What are you talking about?

Lucy apparently bought it as a birthday present Werent you born in October?

So what?

Noel was astonished at Felixs reply. Wow, Sunbae. You dont have common sense.

What do you mean. Felix was irritated at Noels sudden strange behavior.

The past few days passed through his mind. The time he spent with Lucy

Well?

Felixs eyes opened wide. Then he slowly rose from his seat and immediately left the room, leaving Adrian, Noel, and Eric sitting in the room with a puzzled looks on their faces.

Where are you going?

Felix could hear Adrian incredulous voice but he didnt look back.

The sky that was dyed red earlier disappeared, and only the sound of bugs hidden in the grass under the dark evening sky was heard.

Where should I go?

When he left the dormitory, he clasped his head in agony.

The female student dormitory?

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Upon making up his mind, Felix arrived in front of the girls dormitory at once. But he couldnt get in as he wanted. Mrs. Flora, the superintendent, stood in front of him, wide-eyed and angry.

How dare a man crawl in! Not even the principal can enter without my permission!

Unlike superintendent Lauren, who sometimes writes a permit for the female students, she was strict and determined.

The female students in the dormitory looked out of the window curiously after hearing Floras clear voice.

Felix had no choice but to turn away from the female dormitory. He trudged helplessly toward the males dormitory with a confused expression. Everything was a mess, and he was the reason for it.

He misunderstood everything and behaved childishly.

Even if Lucy was tired of him and avoiding him on purpose, he could not protest. If he were her, he would do the same.

People like me

Felix returned to the dormitory and was frozen on the spot. He stared at the flowerbed in front of the dormitory with his eyes wide open.

Lucy!

Next to the ornamental tree planted in the flower bed was Lucy, sitting on the ground. She immediately stood up upon hearing Felix.

Felix-sunbae, Lucy said, her emerald eyes shining under the moonlight in the dark autumn evening.

Felix approached her. However, when he got closer, Lucy suddenly stepped back. Felix stopped at her unfamiliar behavior.

Lucy stood silent in her place and looked at him, instead of smiling brightly at him like before or approaching him with a welcoming voice saying, Sunbae!

For a moment, Felix remembered the first time he had known her was when she was busy running away and avoiding him.

No, thats wrong, too.

Somehow, he felt more distant from her than he had then. Her blank face with no emotion seemed to say so.

Lucy, who had hesitated for a while, spoke slowly. Sunbae. I dont know why youre angry, but

Contrary to her calm expression, Lucys voice trembled slightly. Regardless of how you feel, Ive enjoyed spending the past few weeks with you. We went to town together, and we studied together.

Her words knocked Felix off his feet. He blinked as if he had lost his mind. What she said was so unexpected that he couldnt immediately understand it.

I was so happy that I wished those times would never end. Of course, there are many moments in my life when I feel happy, but its the first time Ive been so happy. I dont think Ill ever feel that way again. But I was so happy that I didnt consider your position.

Before he knew it, Lucys face was filled with sorrow. She was like a ghost at that moment. The ghost standing in front of him but seemed to disappear quickly in a sudden gust of wind.

Youre right, Sunbae. I think I was being greedy for wanting to study together.

Lucy. Felix was out of breath. His mind went blank as if he were dizzy.

He reached out to her. But Lucy took another step back. Felixs hand fell from the air in vain at the obvious rejection.

Lucy avoided his gaze and pulled something out of her pocket. It was a small box. She held it out to him. I was going to give this to you on your birthday, but Ill give it to you now. I dont think Ill see you then.

Felix took it in a daze.

Well, Ill have to go. Lucy took a step forward and tried to leave him.

Lucy, wait! Felix held her by the wrist in a hurry.

Lucy looked back at him. Her cold eyes, which he had never seen before, met Felixs eyes, and Felix found himself letting go of her wrist.

Lucy strode away into the darkness, leaving Felix standing in place.

He stood staring at the place where she had disappeared for a long time and felt like he was dreaming.

Her words that her time with him made her happy and that she would never see him again sounded like they came from a faraway dream to him.

Why Whats going on here? he murmured in the dark.

He felt the small box in his hand as he stood in a trance and opened the lid of the box in a daze. When he saw the necklace in the box, Felix let out a deep breath. A deep sense of regret came over him. He picked up the necklace slowly.

In the tiny crystal, his constellation shone brightly in the moonlight.

* * *

Eight years ago, Lucy never imagined that she would be able to attend one of the best academies in the empire. She was only ten years old at the time, and all she knew of the world was Brom, her hometown.

The village was a quiet rural village located at the eastern edge of the empire with small mountains lined with soft ridges. Fresh green waves fluttered along the wind in the fields. The bright sun glistened in the clear blue sky, day after day. On the dirt road, chickens, dogs, and children ran together, and laughter rang out here and there.

Although she had never been out of town, Lucy had her own happy days in the simple and peaceful village. At that time, she had one dream that was more important than entering a leading academy. It was to inherit her grandmothers medicine shop.

Lucys grandmother ran the only pharmacy in town. More than 50 years ago, she lost her husband during the war, and she carried Lucys father, who was a newborn baby, on her back and set up a pharmacy with the money she saved.

She had incomparable knowledge and a unique sense of dealing with herbs. Thanks to this, even after the war had ended, her shabby little medicine shop remained firmly in the same place for decades.

The grandmother made her only son study hard with the money she earned from running a pharmacy. Thanks to this, Lucys father was able to learn medicine at a clinic in a nearby city.

Now that he had become a doctor with twenty years of experience, he gained the villagers trust as Broms only doctor and the Lords doctor. He was quite successful for a commoner from the countryside.

Lucys grandmother, who was a war widow, built a great family in half a century.

It was a distant past that Lucy had never witnessed, but just hearing the story was enough to tell how difficult and great the road her grandmother had been through. It was all thanks to her grandmother that she was able to sleep in a comfy bed and eat well every day.

In Lucys eyes, her grandmother was more powerful and bold than anyone else. After hearing her grandmothers story as if it were a heroic tale, she was inspired to take over the pharmacy and run it well one day.

Lucy thought her Grandmas hands were like magic whenever she saw her grandmother squishy, calloused hands. Then she looked up at her small and fair hand.

Could such powers reside in this hand of hers?

Besides her herbal skills, Lucy had another ability she inherited from her grandmother.

Lucy! The food is going to get cold. Come on!

It was her grandmothers cooking skill that no one could imitate.

Lucy, who was chasing the wild cat that suddenly appeared in the yard, jumped up. She quickly ran to the kitchen. On the table was a large, juicy roast chicken. She unknowingly brought her nose closer and took a whiff of the enticing aroma.

Lucy was unable to stop her mouth from watering. She quickly sat down on the chair and reached for the roast chicken.

Wait a minute, The old lady quickly stopped her hand, and Lucy looked at her, puzzled. She continued, We have something else to eat, and this is a chicken for the lords house. Hurry up and bring it to them before it gets cold.

Lucy pouted and frowned at the words. These errands have been getting on her nerves lately.

I dont want to see Collin! she complained to herself.

Come on, Lucy. Hurry up, her grandmother urged her by holding out a bowl containing roasted chicken; perhaps she knew how Lucy felt.

Lucy carefully took the bowl with both hands reluctantly and left the house.

There was a particular reason why she didnt want to go to the lords house. At some point, the Lords employees kept telling her lame jokes every time they saw her.

Sure enough, when they saw Lucy entering the lords mansion with the roasted chicken, old man Tom, the stable keeper, quickly greeted her with a joke.

Here comes my little lady.

Dont call me that! Lucy bawled at once.

The old man laughed and walked past her in spite of her bitter protest. Lucy glared disapprovingly at his sly backside.

One day, her village elders began to spread words that Lucy would be the lords daughter-in-law. Then the distasteful joke started as if the engagement between Lucy and Colin, the son of the lord, had been confirmed.

For Lucy, the whole thing was very difficult to swallow. No matter how good their lord was and how well she grew up, there was a stark difference in their status in this world.

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Lucy, did you prepare lunch for your groom?

Lucy was horrified at the words her Aunt Lisa, the maid, threw as she came out carrying a laundry basket.

Dont say that! Colin is the lords son, and Im the daughter of a doctor! The lord might not like it if he hears it!

Youre worried about everything! Lisa said, and much like Tom, she laughed heartily. Who in this town doesnt know that the lord has chosen you as his daughter-in-law?

Ha!

Lucy ran away from the scene, her face red.

Everyone is out of their minds! How can they think Im going to marry Colin?

No way, Lucy muttered and hurried along.

But recently, when she remembered Baron Connor smiling at her with a particularly gentle smile, Lucy was afraid that he had indeed viewed her as Colins bride.

I dont want to marry Colin!

Lucy shook her head. Colin was the same age as her, but he was one hand shorter. They grew up together since they were young, so he was like a younger brother to her and nothing else.

A scene unfolded in her mind as she frowned.

In the distant future, Lucy was now an adult. She was cooking for her husband in the kitchen of a small and cute newlywed home. Then someone sneaked up behind her and hugged her

Is it Colin? Ugh!

She shivered. Goosebumps were rising all over her body. It felt as strange as watching the roasted chicken suddenly rising up and dancing around on the floor.

Colin, no way!

She was very determined.

Well, Id rather have Hans, the blacksmith. Hes a lot more mature than Colin, and he sometimes fixes our fences and greets me.

Lucy remembered Hans, the eldest son of the village blacksmith. Now 14 years old, he was taller than his peers and more mature.

Anyway, Ill have to tell my mom soon. If the Baron wants to take me, Ill refuse!

With that thought in her head, she heard Colins voice just in time.

Lucy! Colin, who found her entering the mansion, ran toward her.

Before Colin could say anything, Lucy held out her bowl and said, Now, my grandmother told me to give this to you. Bring it to the kitchen. Ill be on my way.

Lucy didnt want to be seen with Colin, so she quickly handed him the dish and tried to leave. However, Colin somehow grabbed Lucys arm with a look that said he didnt care about the roasted chicken.

Whats wrong with you?

Thats not the problem now! Colins fussy pull nearly made her drop the bowl. Do you know whos here now? he asked excitedly. Then, without giving her time to answer, he shouted, Aunt Triana! She said shed show me around Bethel!

What? Lucy opened her eyes wide when she heard Bethel.

The capital, its the capital! Where His Majesty lives! Colin was so excited that he jumped in place, holding Lucy. As a result, the roasted chicken popped up from the bowl.

Lucy barely noticed the roasted chicken on the bowl as her mouth hung open.

Bethel, the capital of the Belos Empire.

For Lucy, who had never left her hometown in her life, it felt as distant as the world of the fairies. She only heard about it a few times from her father. It was a far-off place that could only be reached after riding a horse-drawn carriage for ten days.

A place where magnificent buildings are lined up and people roam around even at night.

When we go to Bethel, we will start with the Imperial Palace! Visit Bethel Square! And visit the market too! There must be so many amazing things that cant be compared to the market here!

Wow! Lucy opened her mouth wide and admired Colins words. Her eyes, which had previously been stand-offish, were now filled with envy.

I envy you. I wish I could go there too! she murmured sullenly.

What are you talking about? Of course, you should go with me! Colin shouted, his eyes wide open.

Really? Lucys eyes were bigger than Colins. Can I come with you?

Of course! My father even asked my aunt to take you with us!

Lucy paused at his words, and her eyes narrowed when the lord was mentioned. His intentions were highly questionable.

You wont really ask me to marry Colin, will you?

Lucy looked quite grave and troubled, but Bethels brilliant and beautiful splendor was forming in her mind. Besides, if it was not for this opportunity, she never knew when she would be able to visit the capital.

Traveling was a rare opportunity for a country girl. So, when the opportunity came, she had to hold on to it.

Come on, hurry up! Lets go and say hello to my aunt! Colin pulled Lucys hand, and she followed after him, pretending to be dragged unwillingly.

Her heart pounded wildly with surprise and excitement at the sudden offer of a trip to the capital. Her grandmothers roasted chicken had already been pushed out of her mind.

* * *

Lady Triana, Colins great-aunt, was an incredible and generous person. Sitting on the sofa in a relaxed manner, she smiled and shook hands with Lucy, who followed Colin into the parlor.

Oh, youre the doctors daughter! I had an upset stomach on my visit ten years ago, and he healed me in no time!

She pulled Lucy into the seat next to her. Stifled by the ladys extravagant energy, Lucy shrugged her shoulders and looked forward nervously.

Have you ever been to the capital?

Lucy shook her head quietly at the ladys question.

Colin and Lucy have never left Brom yet, Auntie, said Baroness Connor, who was sitting across from Lady Triana.

Not even once? Oh no! Lady Triana clicked her tongue with a sad look. Of course, Brom is a good place. The air is clear, and the people are generous. Who would think this was the place where the war broke out?

Brom was one of the territorial disputes with the neighboring kingdom of Lausanne until the former emperor Milios reorganized the eastern border more than 50 years ago. However, the traces of war were now only distant memories of the past.

Lady Triana continued, looking out the window at the peaceful and calm landscape, Its a great blessing to be born and raised in such a town. But at least once, you have to go out into a bigger world and experience life. Country girls are no exception.

She turned to Lucy. Despite her strong impression, her tender eyes gazed at Lucy. Traveling is very important in life! Sometimes it completely changes a persons life.

A bigger world Travel

Lucy repeated Lady Trianas words with a twinkle in her eyes. Just dreaming of the trip made her heart full.

Lady Triana was quick and straightforward. Having ended her trip to the East by visiting Brom, she said she would take Colin and Lucy with her when she returned to the capital.

Upon hearing the wonderful news, Lucy managed to calm herself down, greeted her politely, and left the parlor. Then, as soon as the door closed, she rushed home.

Grandmother! Mom! Dad! Lucy jerked open the door and looked for her family. She had to tell everyone the great news.

Upon hearing that Lady Triana had agreed to take Lucy to the capital, her grandmother and father celebrated together with joy.

Thats great! Ive never been to the capital, her dad said, looking as excited as Lucy.

But, her mother soon became worried. Well, Lucy is only ten years old. Its kind of hard to send her

She was reluctant to give her consent but soon changed her mind as soon as she saw Lady Trianas carriage.

The four-wheeled carriage, pulled by four horses, was of the finest quality that could not be seen in their area and was quite spacious inside. In addition, Lucys mother allowed her to travel with a more relieved expression after seeing the knights guarding the carriage.

A few days later, Lucy got into the huge carriage with a small suitcase. Colin was next to her. Her grandmother, mother, father, and Baroness Connor stood near the window, waving their hands toward the carriage.

Unlike Colin, who waved his hands wildly with an excited face, Lucy sat stiffly with an awkward expression and raised her hand.

She was very nervous and excited about her first trip.

* * *

Lady Trianas carriage was huge, and the chair was soft. However, she couldnt help feeling tired after a long trip.

Nevertheless, Lucy was still excited and happy. Although her body was tired, she was unable to take her eyes off the window as breathtaking landscapes constantly unfolded before her.

What if I see such beautiful sights so much that I wont feel anything when I get to the capital?

She was so worried, but it was a pointless concern.

It had been ten days since she left Brom, and at last, Lucy arrived at Bethel. She could not keep her mouth shut at the magnificent and brilliant sight. The view was so amazing that even Colin kept his mouth shut. Looking at him, his mouth also hung open, and he couldnt utter a single word.

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Chapter 35

A huge square that even if you move all the houses in Brom there, there still will be a lot of empty space. A spacious road where even even ten carriages could passed through comfortably. A larger and more splendid street building than Baron Connors mansion. People walking by dressed in all sorts of splendid clothes.

Lucys eyes glanced out of the carriage at the sight she had never seen before.

The carriage, carrying two astonished children and a noble lady looking at them, trotted briskly toward the mansion.

Lady Trianas residence, where Lucy and Colin will stay during their trip to the capital, was twice as large as Baron Connors mansion. She treated Lucy and Colin as formal guests and gave each one a luxurious guest room.

Lucy stood still for a moment, surprised by the sheer size of the room, which is as big as their house. Then, she excitedly climbed onto the luxurious, high-rise bed.

A knock came on the door while she was admiring the comfortable and fluffy bed.

Miss, the bath is ready. Would you like to wash now?

Oh, miss?

Lucys eyes widened at the way she was called by the maid. She was never called miss before.

When there was no answer, the maid asked again, Miss? Are you inside?

Oh, I Lucy immediately got out of bed and ran to the door. She opened the door and peeped outside.

The maid, standing with a puzzled expression, looked down at Lucy in wonder, and immediately smiled kindly.

Would you like to wash now? Or do you want to take a bath after dinner.

Oh my! Youre willing to take the trouble of preparing the bath twice just for me.

Lucy shook her hand in astonishment. I Ill do it now. She quickly left the room and followed the maid who showed her around.

To her surprise, when she followed the maid, a large bathtub scented with perfume was waiting for her, and more surprisingly, the maid, who had guided her, helped her take a bath. She felt awkward at the unfamiliar touch of someone other than her mother and grandmother, but for a moment, her eyes, which were tired of traveling, closed smoothly.

The subtle scent from the candle on the wall made her feel comfortable.

It was her first trip. A first-time experience.

Lucy was excited. The Imperial Palace, the Market, the Museum and the Temple. Her heart leaped at the thought of visiting all of them.

It was as if something extraordinary was waiting for her, something she had never even imagined before.

* * *

And Lucys prediction was not wrong.

During her trip to the capital, Lucys most unforgettable memory happened in an unexpected place. It was not at the imperial palace, a huge market, a museum, or a temple selling all kinds of strange things, which she really wanted to go to.

It was in the Marquis of Everen, a nobleman's mansion she had never heard of.

Almost a month after her visit to the capital, Lady Triana suggested to Lucy to go to a luncheon hosted by Marquis Everen. It was said to be for women of all ages.

Although she felt sorry that she had to leave Colin alone, Lucy readily followed Lady Triana. It was the first time she was invited to a social gathering. She was both excited and nervous.

When she arrived at the Marquis mansion and got out of the carriage, Lucys eyes widened at the magnificent view. It seemed a little subtle compared to Lady Trianas luxurious and splendid mansion, but the enormous sense of intimidation it gave off was beyond compare.

The luncheon was set up in the garden. The ladies who had arrived first gathered around the table decorated with fragrant roses. They stood gracefully and was talking to each other.

Some tables were not only for ladies, but also for girls of Lucys age. As soon as the children saw Lucy, they stopped talking and stared at her.

Lucy, a little frightened, stood close to Lady Triana. She followed behind her, but it was very awkward.

Hiding behind Lady Triana, she watched the young girls from noble families sitting together and chattering, Lucy then turned again toward the mansion.

Wow, are all the houses in the capital so nice?

The white brick mansion was the most beautiful house she had ever seen.

Lucys eyes stopped somewhere as she looked up, enraptured by the mansion. It was a terrace toward the garden. There stood a woman in a snow-white dress.

G ghost?

Lucy opened her eyes wide.

The black hair of the woman which was loosened carelessly fluttered around in the chilly autumn breeze. Her skin looks paler in contrast to the dark-night-sky-like hair color.

The ghostly woman did not seem to be interested in the much energetic luncheon, and did not even spare them single glance. She just stood on the terrace and stared blankly somewhere beyond the garden.

Look over there, madam, said Lucy, slightly pulling the hem of Lady Trianas dress. Lucy pointed her finger at the terrace as she turned her head. Theres a ghost.

Not only Lady Triana, but also the ladies sitting around, looked up at the terrace.

Hush! One of them quickly put her finger to her mouth. Everyone, dont look at her, she warned. Shes the daughter of Marquis Everen. The Duchess of Berg!

Her words hastened the ladies gaze. Another woman, who was standing nearby said, I heard she had a quarrel with the duke and ran away from home.

Hush! A noble lady warned them. Everyone, pretend you didnt see anything! If Marquis Everen was offended, nothing good will come out of it. she said, looking at the Marquis, sitting far in the upper seat. At that, the ladies covered their faces with their fans and coughed loudly.

Oh, it wasnt a ghost.

While everyone looked away from the pale woman, Lucy still stared at her.

The lady on the terrace stood still for a long time, not knowing that the ladies gathered in the luncheon were glancing at her. Shaking uncontrollably at the coming autumn breeze, she finally curled up her shoulders and fastened her shawl then went into the room.

Why doesnt she get along with people?

After the woman disappeared, Lucy looked at the terrace curiously. However, the ladies, who had been whispering about her secretly, quickly changed the subject of conversation.

The topic of the conversation was too difficult for Lucy to understand and she was not interested. She began to fidget in her seat. Lucy quickly became bored as nobles of her age had formed their own group, sitting by themselves.

Everyone was participating in this luncheon so naturally. Only Lucy was sitting far away, inconsistent with the purpose of a social gathering. She felt like she was alone in a country where she couldnt communicate. She never had the courage to talk to other girls.

Lady Triana, Lucy called her carefully. May I take a look at the garden?

The lady, who was absorbed in the conversation with the other ladies, smiled graciously and looked down at Lucy.

Yes, Lucy, I hear you're interested in flowers, aren't you? That's why I wanted to bring you here. The garden of Everen has a reputation for being beautiful throughout the empire, Lady Triana said with a proud look on her face.

The garden is always open to invited guests. So please feel free to go there and look around.

Lucy stood up with a bright smile at the words.

There was a garden in Baron Connors' house. It was full of simple flowers and plants of modest shape, in accordance to Baroness Connors' simple taste.

However, the garden on Everen looked extraordinary in size. Beyond the fence in full bloom of autumn roses, a mysterious flower bed spread out.

With Lady Triana's permission, Lucy ran straight to the garden.

As she grew farther away from the lively atmosphere of the luncheon, the tranquility and peace of the garden came.

The only sounds she could hear were the clear cries of birds and the sound of a fountain spraying cool water from somewhere in the garden.

Lucy felt as if she had entered a huge flower basket.

There were flowers in the garden that she knew well, but there were also many flowers that she had never seen before. They were brought in from a region other than the Beros Empire, showing off an unfamiliar and exotic appearance.

Lucy was dazzled by the beautiful shapes and colorful colors of the flowers. She was so preoccupied by the flowers that she walked for a long time.

Soon, a fence appeared in front of her, and the garden reached its end. Beyond the fence lay a thick oak forest, and something caught Lucy's eyes: a large lake.

The fallen leaves from the trees filled the edge of the lake. The waves of fallen leaves fluttered slowly whenever the wind blew.

Wow, it's so pretty! Lucy exclaimed. In fact, the flowers in the garden were wonderful, but for Lucy, this natural beauty touched her more.

Lucy, who was approaching the lake over the fence with a smile, stopped. There was already someone by the lake.

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Chapter 36

It was some kid.

The kid was sitting underneath the oak tree hugging his knees and burying his head. His golden hair, covering his face, shone brilliantly in the sun.

Lucy hesitated for a moment.

Can I come closer?

After a while, she walked quietly to the kid. The kid didn't notice Lucy's presence, and did not move a bit.

Wow, it's beautiful..

Lucy stopped at a distance, opened her mouth wide as she watched her fine, glossy blond hair.

Of course, there were people with blonde hair in Brom, too. Loara, the daughter of an orchard, and Anna from the flower shop.

They were proud of their beautiful blond hair and took great care of it. Lucy sometimes touched their golden hair with envy.

However, the blond hair that Lucy touched was not as golden as this kid's hair, it was so shiny and beautiful. It was as if the sun had been spun into a spinning wheel and squeezed out of thread.

Can I talk to you?

Lucy hesitated and finally spoke.

Excuse me

The child who heard her voice raised his head. He was a handsome boy.

Whoops

Lucy admired it once again.

Blue eyes that seemed to have copied the color of the lake right next to it were twinkling on the child's face.

The boy looked up at Lucy with a sullen face and buried his head again.

Are you crying? Are you in trouble? Why are you here alone?

Lucy watched the boy quietly. He was distracted by his blonde hair and discovered belatedly that the clothes he was wearing also looked expensive and luxurious.

Is he one of the children who came with the ladies? But I heard that this is a gathering that only women can come to.

Lucy thought so and sat a little far away from the boy.

She heard a mountain bird crying from a distance. The forest felt quieter in line with the sound of the lake.

Its like a completely different world here.

thought Lucy, breathing in the fresh air.

Then suddenly there was a rustling sound. She turned her head and saw the boy scratching his arm.

Lucy was astonished.

It was because there were scars all over the arm where the sleeves were rolled up. He continued to scratch his arm, and then blood began to flow from his wound.

Lucy jumped out of her seat. She rushed to the boy and said hastily.

Dont scratch it! Its bleeding!

.

The boy didnt answer. He scratched and scratched his still bleeding arm. Soon he began to scratch his neck. The back of his neck was full of wounds.

Dont scratch it! Lucy cried in surprise.

Go away,

A sullen voice came out from the blond hair kid.

It will itch more if you scratch it. said Lucy, without giving up. The boy looked up.

It feels itchy even if I stay still.

Lucy saw the red marks on his face.

Its

She had seen several patients with the same symptoms who had visited her father. There were red marks all over their bodies, just like the boys.

Perhaps youre allergic to maram? said Lucy, looking around. In all directions, there are maram vines growing around the base of the oak trees.

Why are you sitting here when you have an allergy?

To Lucys question, the boy pouted his lips and answered.

Its up to me. Im comfortable here.

Youre scratching your body until it bleeds because its itchy and yet you feel more comfortable here?

Lucy looked down at the boy in wonder.

In the meantime, the boy was now trying to find a new area to scratch. He rolled up his trousers and began scratching his ankle this time.

Wait!

Lucy stopped him in a hurry.

She looked around her. She soon found Mogana grass, and put it on the rock and ground it and tried to put it on the boys ankle.

What? What are you doing?

Stay still!

The boy, who was trying to push Lucy, suddenly stopped moving due to the coolness he felt in his ankle.

How is it? Isnt it cool?

At her question, the boy looked at her with a strange look on his face.

Soon he nodded reluctantly.

Yes,

This is the plant of Mogana; youll feel cool if you hit it with a stone and put it on your body.

Put it here, too.

He popped out his wounded arm.

Not there, Its already bleeding. Ill disinfect it and apply ointment to the wound.

Lucy took out a small bottle of ointment from her usual small bag. She held it out to the boy.

Hey,

But the boy turned his head and turned away.

Well, I dont put on any unknown medicine.

This is made by my grandmother! My grandmother is the most famous pharmacist in Brom!

.

Ugh,

Youre picky.

Eventually, Lucy put the medicine bottle back in her bag. The boy looked at the figure and buried his head between his knees again.

He seemed to mean that he didnt want to talk to her anymore. Lucy didnt want to interfere anymore too. The boy was too arrogant and feisty.

Lucy rose from her seat.

Im going to look around the garden more.

She thought it would be better to see more flowers than to spend time with a boy she didnt even know.

But her feet didnt want to move at all from her seat. Her eyes turned to the wounded back of the boy who had been crouching over.

Lucy always has a weak heart whenever she sees a wound.

She had to take the ointment out of her bag again. Then he laid it down at the boys feet.

Well, Ill put it here. Its up to you whether you want it or not.

Lucy said, and the boy raised his head and looked down at the ointment. He didnt pick it up and pack it, but he also didnt say he didnt need it.

Oh, youre so coy.

As Lucy murmured to herself, the boy murmured:

Thank you,

Lucy blinked as she saw the child thanked her with a discouraged spirit.

But I dont think hes very crooked.

She smiled slightly and sat back a little away from him.

A rustling sound was heard next to her as he picked up the ointment and put it in his pocket. Her feelings of resentment over the kid until recently have gradually subsided.

Lucy hugged her knees like the boy with a much more relaxed face. Then, without a word, he looked at the gently swaying surface of the lake.

Flowers showing off their colorful colors, topiary trimmed by the gardeners fine work, beautiful fountain.

Those things are good, but Lucy was happier to sit still in nature that was untouched by humans.

Moreover, she had never seen such a beautiful and mysterious lake before.

Suddenly Lucy raised her face in the warm breath felt around her neck. As she turned her head sideways, she screamed in surprise.

Oh, my!

She fell down on her back.

The boy, who had his head buried in his lap, came close and twitched his nose as if he smelled something.

What?

At Lucys absurd question, the boy straightened his upper body again and said;

You smell like grass. And

He paused for a moment. Lucy swallowed, waiting for the next word. The boy twitched his nose again and went on.

And the smell of horse dung.

Smell of horse dung?

Do you work in a stable?

Lucy frowned at his question as if it were absurd.

I do not work!

Lucy, who had fallen back and was staring blankly at the boys mouth, lost her temper.

Im still ten years old! And Im here as a guest today!

I dont care,

I dont care? You asked me first!

Lucy almost squealed.

The idea that he was not very crooked just now was canceled. He was a very mean fellow.

Are all the capital kids like this?

Lucy pouted her mouth and took off the hat she was wearing and hid it behind her back.

The scent the boy smelled is probably from the hat.

The hat was bought a year ago by her father on his way back from another city. It was a rather cute hat decorated with pale pink and white lace ribbons.

Lucy always wears the hat when she goes to Barons birthday parties, picnics in the woods, or to the market with her mother.

It was Lucys most precious hat, and it was her favorite hat.

So, before coming to this social gathering, she changed into the dress chosen by the maids of the mansion, but she did not change her hat.

Lucy suddenly became angry.

Its not a smell of horse dung, its just the smell of soil.

Lucy corrected the boys words with a blunt look.

The smell of soil, grass, trees, and farms.

Of course, you cant tell the difference between the smell of the stables and the smell of the soil, even if I explain it to you, you wont understand.

Lucy grumbled to herself.

The boy seemed not interested in Lucys explanation. He shrugged his shoulders with a hesitant look and put his chin on his arm again.

Lucy, with a sullen face, shook off the leaves on her dress. Then shook off the dust on her palms, as she touched the ground when she fell.

She was about to get out of her seat, but she felt another gaze from the side. The boy was staring at her.

Why? asked Lucy, in a cold tone.

Do I smell like dog poo this time?

She held back what she wanted to say.

Your eyes,

The boy looked at Lucys eyes. Just as Lucy looked up wondering what else he was going to say, the boy said unexpected words.

Its like an emerald,

Sienna

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What?

Lucy jumped out of her seat. The boy, sitting in a relaxed manner, was surprised and looked up at her.

Lucy looked at the boy more astonished than ever.

How can you say such a thing?

Her eyes and mouth were wide open.

Lucys response made the boy roll his eyes with a puzzled look. He seemed to wonder if he had said anything bad.

Lucy stuttered in shock.

Thats Thats!

Thats what my dad said when he proposed to my mom!

Lucy gulped down the back of her throat.

How dare you say such shameful things to a girl youve never seen before? Are the kids in the capital usually this bold?

The boy said with a snort as Lucy stood with her mouth open.

Youre such a weirdo,

Lucy burst into laughter.

Who are you to say that?

She looked at him with fierce eyes, and the boy, too, looked at her without avoiding her eyes.

What? Is this a staring contest?

This time Lucy glared even more fiercely.

However, the boy tilted his head and straightened his upper body. Rather than a staring contest, she looked into Lucys eyes as if observing it.

His forehead was wrinkled and one eyebrow raised. His tight lips wriggled as if he had something to complain about.

The boy looked into Lucys eyes and seemed to have something serious on his mind.

Oh, I remember!

At last, the boy shouted with a cool face like a person whose congestion had gone away.

Your eyes,

It was about her eyes again. Lucy stepped back from the boy with a nervous face.

What are you going to say this time?

It looks like the emerald in The Witches Tears.

what is it?

The Witches Tears! You know the picture of Ezalda, the Witch of the Forest, holding an emerald. I mean the painting of the genius artist Lucent.

Ive never heard of that painting before, and Ive never heard of that painter before.

Lucy didnt understand the boys words and just blinked, and the boy said again as if frustrated.

Artist Lucent! The most famous painter in the Empire, dont you know?

I dont know,

Ugh,

The thought of being ignorant made Lucy angry.

I dont know such a painter! Ive never seen such a painting!

Of course! Its hanging in the hallway. How can you see it?

Lucy clenched her fist.

Ill hit you just once and run away.

Lucy stared at the boys ugly forehead with serious thought.

But what are you doing here? asked the boy suddenly.

Why did you come so far? This is my area.

Lucy snorted this time.

Well, what do you mean your area? This is just a lake.

The boy shrugged his shoulders and hugged his knees again. Then he buried his face helplessly.

Suddenly, looking at his glum face, Lucy, who somehow felt sorry, suggested,
theres a lot of good food over there. Why dont you go and eat, too?

.

Its a gathering where only women are invited, but I dont think they will kick you out?

You go,

He was a boy who she couldnt understand at all.

I cant believe youre hiding in the corner of a grassy garden that causes allergic reactions.

Is it because youre shy?

.

Do you want me to speak for you?

Never mind. I like being alone. I hate it when there are so many people.

A murmuring voice came out of his mouth.

Lucy stared down at the boy's reddish neck. She couldn't see his face, but she knows what kind of face he is making when he said he likes being alone.

I want to disappear.

The boy's voice that came out once more flew away with the autumn wind blowing from the lake.

Well

Lucy felt sorry for the boy and said something to comfort him. She opened her lips but I couldn't think of what to say.

It was then.

They heard footsteps running their way from over the garden fence. After a while, someone appeared from behind a large tree.

Looking at her outfit, she seemed to be a maid working in the mansion. When she saw the boy crouching down, she cried out.

Young master!

She came running to the boy in a hurry. She hurried the boy to his feet. Then she shook off the dirt and grass on his clothes.

Oh, you scratched yourself again! Look at this blood!

As she was arranging his clothes, she looked at the back of the bleeding boy's hand and forearm and said,

What is this plant? The maid, who was arranging the boy's trousers, looked at the grass attached to his ankle like a leech and asked, the boy began to recite exactly what he had heard from Lucy with a hesitant face.

This is the plant of Mogana, if you pound it like this and put it on the itchy spot.

But the maid, listening to him, took the grass off his ankle and threw it on the floor.

Now, come on in, young master, if you stay here, your allergy will get worse.

The maid did not even look at Lucy, who was standing nearby, and tried to leave the lake with only the boy.

The boy grumbled something with a bothered and annoyed look. But he was drawn into the strong maids hand.

The boy, who was leaving the lake, suddenly turned his head. The boys lake-like eyes met Lucys emerald-like eyes in the air.

Then he moved his lips and said,

Good-bye,

Yeah, good-bye,

Lucy raised her hand awkwardly.

The boy was seized by the maids hand and left the lake with an indifferent look.

Lucy, who stood still under the oak for a moment, shook her head and came to her senses.

Its been too long,

Mrs. Triana might be worried. Lucy hurried through the garden and back to the luncheon.

She heard familiar voices. The luncheon is nearby. The servants, seen over the fence, were eagerly carrying food, and the maids were busy preparing desserts not far away.

She heard the maids carrying desserts whispering.

they said they had found Prince Berg. He must have been alone in the garden again.

Why does he keep going into the garden when he has an allergy?

Prince of Berg

Lucy, who had been eavesdropping on the maids story, murmured to herself.

So, that kid is Prince Berg. The dukes son.

She had never seen anyone that has a status as high as the duke. Of course, its the same with the son of the duke.

A person like a duke was a man who Lucy would never meet in her life. This is because they will never come to a rural village like Brom to help the emperor run state affairs while living in the capital.

So, it was a very rare chance to run into the dukes son in the garden where she came in by chance today.

When Lucy realized it, she opened her eyes wide and shouted,

Wow! Ive met the dukes son!

Lucy realized once again that she had come to the capital.

The dukes son has such brilliant blond hair and blue eyes. Besides, the clothes he wore looked really good! And Im sure he only eats delicious food at this nice house every day, right?

Lucy, who was thinking of the boy one by one, immediately pouted her mouth. She remembered the rude words she had said to him.

Well, the Dukes son doesnt have much to offer. Hes as bad as Broms immature boys.

If you are the dukes son, arent you supposed to speak softly and politely?

Telling people that they smell like horse dung!

Lucy grumbled herself out of the garden.

Soon she saw the ladies talking in elegant voices.

Not surprisingly, the luncheon was going well in a friendly atmosphere. Mrs. Trianas cheeks were slightly red, perhaps because she was drunk with wine.

Lucy returned to her side and sat down.

Oh, Lucy!

She looked at Lucy and said,

How was the garden?

It was beautiful! There were many flowers I had never seen before.

I knew youd like it!

Mrs. Triana smiled with satisfaction.

Soon her interest in the little girl who had returned from her garden expedition quickly shifted away. She continued to talk to other ladies with a slightly tipsy face.

Lucy has now completely given up the idea of getting acquainted with people at this meeting.

It was enough for her to have met the boy and had a memorable conversation. Now Lucy decided to devote herself generously to the food waiting for her on the table, not to people.

After she made up her mind that she could see the cakes and snacks that the servants brought.

Wow!

She thought of the boy for a while. Her eyes widened when she saw the desserts on the table. She reached for the nearest snack without hesitation.

If you dont eat such delicious food, its your loss.

Lucy murmured casually, recalling the boy.

But why was he crouching there with that look on his face?

Lucy, who was unconsciously thinking about the boy, shook her head again.

She took a big bite out of the snack she picked up.

Well never see each other again anyway.

The thought of the prince gradually faded while the rich sweetness she had tasted for the first time in her life melted in her mouth.

* * *

Her days in the capital left a deep impression on Lucy.

Mrs. Trianas statement that one trip could change a persons life was true. Lucy thought she had changed completely.

In fact, on the surface, her life didnt seem to change at all.

She got up early as usual to help her grandmother trim the herbs. She helped her mother prepare food for her family and kicked out the cat sneaking into the yard.

It was the daily routine of an ordinary country girl.

But if you look carefully, there was a surprisingly wide world in her heart.

Even after returning from a trip to the capital, Lucy often recalled brilliant streets and tall buildings.

The imperial palace was more majestic and magnificent than any other place. The night streets of the capital, where the lights never seemed to go out. a vibrant market

Lucy often missed the glorious and tumultuous appearance of the capital.

Sienna

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When she thought back on her trip to the capital, she was reminded of the boy she met in the garden of Marquis Everen.

How are you doing? Dont tell me youve been crouching by the lake again.

Her memory of the boy crouching alone and scratching his skin until he bled was something hard to forget.

Grandmother, do you know how to make medicine for Maram vines allergy? Lucy asked her grandmother, who had been drying herbs.

Maram vines allergy? Why are you suddenly asking me that?

Well, Im just curious,

Thats easy. Her grandmother smiled and stroked Lucys head with her rough hands. Its just an allergy medicine. Grandma knows everything!

Lucys face brightened at her grandmothers boast. Thus, she began to make allergy medicine with the help of her grandmother. She didnt know why, but her hands moved by themselves.

I guess its because I felt sorry seeing him crouching down that it never left my mind.

Lucy thought so.

Yeah, it was annoying, but somehow it bothered me. Its like seeing a dog getting wet in the rain, and it makes me want to help it. But how can I get this to him?

She agonized over the finished medicine.

Could I mail it to the Duke of Berg?

However, she realized they were all useless worries.

He was the Prince of Berg. It was clear that the leading doctors of the Empire were checking the health of the dukes family day and night.

A beggar was worried about the rich. Even if it wasnt her own medicine, the boy must have been receiving the best treatment and care.

Eventually, Lucy sighed lightly and put the medicine bottle deep in the display case.

It was a waste of time and effort to make it, but whats done is done.

Still, Lucy decided to be satisfied with the fact that she made the medicine for someone who was in pain.

As time passed, the days of thinking about the boy became fewer, and the regret of not being able to send the medicine faded.

Lucy, the allergy medicine I made the other day was still in the cabinet. Didnt you make it for someone? Lucys grandmother asked.

I just tried making it. It would be useful to know how to make any medicine, Lucy replied with a firm smile.

Upon hearing Lucys answer, her grandmother smiled happily.

Well, Ill tell you everything I know about medicine, so dont worry! You will take over this pharmacy one day.

Lucys smile faded slightly at her grandmothers words, but soon she smiled broadly. Yes, of course.

Lucy, pretending to be calm, had another dream in the corner of her heart. A dream she couldnt tell anyone about.

It was to go to the capital again.

Of course, she loved Brom, the place where she was born and raised, but in Lucys mind, the lively and magnificent sight of the capital rarely left her.

It was her secret that she could never reveal to her grandmother. She was sure her grandmother would be disappointed if she found out about it.

With the secret hidden in her heart, Lucy again lived a peaceful and insignificant life as a country girl on the outskirts of the empire.

* * *

However, the seeds planted in the little girls heart did not rot over the years and were only taking root.

Then, when Lucy turned 16, it finally began to sprout when she learned of a place called Xenomium Academy.

Xenomium Academy? Once again, Colins pride in the academy piqued Lucys curiosity.

Yes, the prestigious academy near the capital.

Youre going there?

If I pass! Colin shrugged as if he had already passed despite his words.

Wow! Lucy looked at Colin with eyes full of envy.

Colin had strong support as a son of a baron. She heard that he was going to enter a good academy, but Lucy never imagined it would be an academy in the capital.

Lucy recalled her trip to the capital six years ago with Lady Triana. The scenery she saw at that time had faded a little over the years, but the excitement and emotion she felt in her heart were still vivid.

Lucys heart swelled with strange emotions.

Are you going that far?

If Colin went to the Xenomium Academy or something, she wouldnt be able to see him again until he graduated. The capital was indeed a long way away.

Lucys eyebrows dropped as she was disappointed that her best friend would move to a city and she wouldnt get to see him as often.

Colin became sullen when he saw Lucys sad expression and quickly tried to soothe her. Im not staying there forever. Its just three years!

Three years is a long time!

Lucy cried inwardly.

Without you, I have no one to play with.

No matter how much Colin comforted her, Lucy didnt feel better. Even when she got home and had dinner with her family or when she was in bed after finishing her days work. She felt somewhat dejected and disappointed and couldnt sleep until late at night.

Shouldnt I be happy and support my best friend if he can enter a prestigious academy?

Lucy reprimanded herself, scolding her vile heart.

Colin is smart, so Im sure hell get in. Dont be disappointed. Colin deserves a good education at the best academy and deserves to be a good lord.

She constantly urged and encouraged him. But after a long night, even after the next day or many days after that, Lucys mood didnt improve.

Am I really doing this because I dont want Colin to go far away? Or

Lucy agonized over the days and didnt notice that someone was looking at her meaningfully.

Lucys grandmother looked carefully at her granddaughter, becoming more and more enraptured by the day.

Perhaps shes upset at the thought of parting with Colin.

Theyve been together since childhood.

Her grandmother shook her head quietly at Lucys parents guesses. They were having dinner at the table. Thats not it. Her eyes shone sharply. In a few months, Colin will officially go to the academy in the capital for the entrance examination.

Lucy, biting her fork with a blank face, looked up quickly.

Well, thats good, isnt it? Colin is smart, and hell definitely get in. Lucys mother said, looking pleased.

Lucy nodded with an awkward smile and muttered, Yes, I think so too.

This was followed by a conversation about Colins upright mind and their expectations as the next lord of Brom. Despite Lucys nodding agreement, she seemed to be staring in a daze at the tables empty corner.

Lucy, why dont you take the exam with him? her grandmother said, peering at her.

Clank!

Lucy's fork fell to the floor and made a loud noise. It bounced a few times and stopped moving after a while. Then a long silence came over the table.

The whole family looked surprised at her grandmother's unexpected remark.

Lucy stared blankly at her grandmother's face without even thinking about picking up the fork she had dropped.

the academy entrance exam? Me?

No matter how much she thought about it, she felt as if she had been hallucinating. However, her grandmother smiled at her as if telling Lucy that she was not mistaken.

The first person to break the silence was her father.

Mother Are you serious? he asked cautiously, and his face contorted in disbelief. I'm afraid we will have to pay a lot of school expenses.

Xenomium Academy was the most prestigious academy in the empire. Its tuition fees were also incomparable to those of ordinary schools. A slight frown formed on her father's forehead as he began thinking about it.

I was thinking of sending Lucy to school. Even if it's not Xenomium There are good schools in the east. It should be enough for Lucy.

How do you know if it's enough? Lucy's grandmother cut off her father's words firmly. Lucy doesn't express herself very much. So, no one knows exactly what this child wants. Even if you are her father, don't simply make your own judgement.

Lucy's grandmother crossed her arms and continued, I've taught Lucy many things on my own since she was a child. Even the children of noble families who receive a high level of education would find it difficult to do so. I think a school of the right level for this kid is definitely Xenomium.

I know Lucy is a smart girl. But, Mother, Xenomium is impossible with our standing.

When I said I was sending you to a medical school, the villagers said the same thing. They told me not to give you false hope and just teach you how to farm.

Lucy's father, who was about to argue further, went quiet. There was another deep silence at the table. After a while, he sighed shallowly and said calmly, Mother, you know that it doesn't make sense to compare the tuition fees of a local medical center with the Capital Academy, do you?

Don't worry. I have an idea. That's why I brought it up.

Her dad could no longer refute her grandmothers firm attitude.

Lucy, who should be most pleased at that moment, was sitting restlessly on her seat despite her grandmothers words showing infinite faith in her.

Her grandmother said she had an idea, but she didnt really believe it. To Lucys eyes, sending her to the Xenomium Academy was a bad decision for the family.

I just have to say I dont want to go. Its for the better good. That way, Grandma and Dad wont have to argue about this, and Grandma wont have to be sorry for me.

Grandmother, Im Lucy, who had been hesitating, finally spoke.

I dont particularly want to go to Xenomium.

That sentence was enough.

But

Suddenly she jumped up from her seat and ran to her grandmother. Lucy hugged her grandmothers neck and burst into tears.

Thank you, Grandma! she said, choking back her sobs.

Sienna

Chapter 39

Thank you, Grandma! Lucy cried out, sobbing in tears.

The grandmother hugged Lucy tightly and patted her on the back. Lucy couldnt stop crying for a long time in her grandmothers arms.

Her father and mother watched them, slightly surprised, but soon exchanged looks with each other.

If this is what Lucy wanted, they couldnt help but to comply. The smiles they secretly gave each other seemed to say so.

* * *

A few months later, it wasnt only Colin that got into Baron Connors carriage that was off to the Capital, but Lucy as well. She waved to her family outside the window, brimming with excitement, just as she did on the trip to the Capital seven years ago.

I cant believe it. I cant believe Im going to the Capital again and take the entrance exam for the most famous academy in the empire.

With Lucys dream in tow, the carriage sped toward the Capital.

Wow! Colin, thats the fountain we saw back then! Lucy shouted as she looked at Bethel unfolding before her. She had finally return to the Capital after seven years.

Colin! Colin! Theres even a dessert cafe here.

Unlike Lucy, who walked around excitedly reminiscing her fond memories, Colin stood still pretending to be unfazed. In fact, he had traveled to the Capital with the baron several times.

Lucy, whats the matter with you? Do you want people to know that you came from a village? Take it easy.

Lucy gave the sharp-tongued Colin a quick glance, but she paid him no mind and went around the spacious Bethel square. Colin and Baron Connor looked at her with a smile in their eyes.

Yes, Lucy, please relax. You have an exam to take.

Lucy, who had been running around, stopped walking at the Barons words. Her face turned pale as if she had lost all the strength from her body.

Ah, the exam

Tomorrow was the Academy entrance exam, which could be the most important moment of her life. Lucy felt sick as if the food she had eaten was going to come up.

Haha, I shouldnt have said that. The Baron smiled and patted Lucy on the shoulder. Dont worry, youve always done well on your previous mock test.

Baron Connors words were true, but it didnt help Lucy very much. Lucy knew very well that practice and the real thing were different. As soon as she came to the Capital, she felt her confidence, that she had accumulated for the past few years, collapsed at once.

Hey, Lucy! Youll be able to enter the academy, dont worry too much, Colin said, like an older brother who was rooting for his sister.

Lucy calmed her pounding her. This was a path she chose while carrying the concerns and expectations of her family at the same time. She never wanted to create a result that she would regret.

It would have been hard if I were alone.

At that moment, Colin, who came to take the test with her, and Baron Connor, who accompanied them as their guardian, were more reliable than anyone else. So, Lucy wanted to cheer up more.

The next day, before the examination, Baron Connor met up with Lucy and Collin. Dont be nervous. Just do what you usually do.

Despite the Barons encouragement, Lucy could hardly relax. When Colin noticed her uneasiness, he patted Lucy on the back with a playful smile.

Hey, Lucy! Why dont you go to the bathroom again?

Its not like that!

Lucy took a deep breath after glancing at Colin, who was still joking.

Yes, I can do this.

She clenched her fists as if to give herself strength.

I must send the acceptance news to my family.

Then Lucy took a determined step toward the examination hall.

* * *

I have a letter for Mr. Colin Connor and Miss Lucy Keenan, The innkeeper said and placed the food they ordered on the table.

Lucy dropped the napkin she was holding and became lost in thought. It had been a week since they took the entrance examination.

Lucy, Colin, and Baron Connor were staying at an inn in the capital. The journey back to Brom was long and time-consuming, so they decided to remain in the capital until the results came out.

If she received a letter of acceptance from the Academy, she would have to enter the Academy dormitory immediately. If she failed, shed leave with regrets and return to Brom.

Well, its time. Baron Conor accepted two letters with as much tension as Lucy.

She could see the crest of the academy sealing the envelope. When she saw the clear eagle pattern, her heart beat like crazy.

Well, lets see your results, the baron said, handing out the letters, and Lucy accepted it with her hands trembling.

The sound of paper crackling contrasted sharply with her struggle to open the envelope. It was the sound of Colin opening his letter without hesitation. He immediately unfolded the paper inside and read it.

I passed! Colin cried immediately.

As soon as she heard it, Lucy began to tremble all over. She didnt even feel the need to congratulate Colin.

What if I failed? What if Im the only one who has to go back to Brom? What would I say to grandma? What about mom and dad?

Lucy, come on! Next to her, Colin urged Lucy. He was more curious about her result than his own.

Lucy opened the envelope with her hands shaking after making up her mind. Like Colins, there was a folded piece of paper inside.

She didnt have the courage to check. She unfolded the paper with her eyes closed, and she slowly opened her eyes to see the results. Suddenly, her body shook back and forth, and there was a tremendous cheer that almost shattered her eardrums.

Ouch!

Lucy opened her eyes in surprise, and saw Colins face right in front of her. He held her shoulder and shook it wildly. His voice, louder than ever, rang in her ears.

You passed! You made it! Lucy! Youre the top student!

Even the Baron, who would have criticized his sons behavior, quickly took the letter from Lucys hand and read it. Once he confirmed that Colin was telling the truth, he also grabbed her shoulder and shook it. Lucy was utterly dumbfounded.

You passed. You passed!

In the midst of the chaos, only Colins words were heard clearly.

What do you mean, Pass?

Finally, after Baron Connor and his son let Lucy go, she finally read her acceptance letter. She couldnt believe she got accepted at Xenomium Academy! She read the letter again and again. It was so unrealistic that everything felt like a dream.

At that moment, the first people that came to her mind were her family. Her mom and dad, who always cared about her more than she did and always supported her and also her grandmother.

If they were here with her now, they would have congratulated her with more enthusiasm that could rival Baron Connor and Colin. It was such a pity that she could not see the happy face of her grandmother when she heard that she passed immediately.

Lucy! Look at this! Its a certificate of scholarship! Colin pulled another piece of paper out of Lucys envelope.

The paper was a certificate of scholarship stating that upon admission to the Xenomium Academy, all tuition fees for the first semester would be reduced.

Lucys mouth opened wide looking at the certificate. It was a more surprising moment than ever. The tuition problem, which she was so worried about, was solved.

Lucy immediately wrote to her family, relaying the good news. After she left home, she didnt want to keep her family waiting for the news. She laughed when she imagined how happy they would be to hear it. She was elated; she was now a granddaughter her grandmother could be proud of.

A few days later, Lucy heard something unexpected from Colin. Because of this, Lucy became very nervous before entering the school.

Lucy, Lucy! The top student will take the oath as a freshman representative at the entrance ceremony!

What? Lucy eyes opened wide, much like a startled rabbit.

You will take the oath on the podium as the representative! Colin explained excitedly as if he was the one whod be on the podium.

I I cant do that!

Why? You can do it!

An oath taken with hundreds of people staring at you. Lucys eyes widened just imagining it.

Your grandmother will love it! Im sure shell be proud! Colins words brought Lucy to her senses.

Yes Grandma will like it!

Perhaps her grandmother will brag about it to the villagers. Lucys eyes sparkled at the thought.

If this would make her grandmother happy, she thought she could take the oath in front of hundreds of people without fear.

* * *

I really dont like it, Colin said on the day of the entrance ceremony. His arms folded and he looked displeased. He sat with his back hunched, clearly expressing his displeasure with the situation, and stared dagger at the boy on the podium. Youre the top student to enter the school, but why is he taking the oath?

Colins glare grew sharper. He was ready to pierce the back of the boy named Eric Roman with just his eyes.

Sienna

Chapter 40

In any school, it was common practice for the top student to take the freshmen oath on the podium. So it was only natural for Lucy, who was that years top student, to go on the podium as the freshman representative.

However, the name that was called was Eric Roman, a different male student. He was said to be the eldest son of a self-made family.

Eric Roman rose from his seat when his name was called, and a couple sitting in the parents seat applauded loudly. Perhaps they were his parents, Viscount and Viscountess Roman.

Lucy looked back, though she knew that there was no face she wanted to see there, but soon, Baron Connor smiled and raised his hand. She smiled in response.

Im glad my family wasnt able to come.

Lucys family was unable to attend because the distance between Brom and the capital, where the academy was located, was too great. At first, she was disappointed, but now that she thought about it, she was glad. Her family would be sad to see that she could not take the freshmen oath because they were commoners.

It was only about 20 years ago that Xenomium Academy began accepting commoner students. This change in Xenomium was a hot topic in the empire at the time since the academy was exclusively for the nobles.

However, it was a change in name only. Upon closer look, nothing much has really changed. It was still a place of education only for nobles. Discrimination still exists. For example, the Academy never had a commoner student on the podium as a student representative.

It was no exception in the year when Lucy, a commoner, entered as the top student.

They said it was a prestigious school, but its not true, Colin muttered, still full of discontent.

Lucy was also unhappy with the discrimination she received, but her heart calmed down because she had a friend who was angry for her.

All right. Lets take solace in the fact that I got a scholarship.

Lucy consoled herself and looked bitterly at Eric Roman, who was taking the oath as a representative on the podium.

The principals welcome speech continued after Eric Romans oath was over. His monotonous and slow speech quickly created a dull atmosphere in the hall. When he was finally done, mandatory applause continued from the audience. Everyone looked as if they wanted the principal, who had no sense of humor, to get down quickly.

The next moment, however, the atmosphere of the Great Hall was completely changed when a male student walked up the podium after the principal. Everyones eyes turned toward the boy, and at the same time there was a moment of silence in the hall.

His tall height stood out among many male students, coupled with his calm gait and blond hair.

Lucys eyes grew bigger. She remembered seeing such beautiful golden hair. A memory that she had forgotten for a moment rose from her mind like fog clearing up.

The hall, which had been silent, began to stir again. The new students sitting around Lucy exchanged whispers.

Hes the second-year student council president.

Do you mean the Prince of Berg?

Lucy stopped breathing at the familiar name.

Prince of Berg

Her eyes followed the back of the boy climbing onto the platform. Finally, standing in the middle of the platform, she almost jumped out of her seat as he turned to the left. His eyes, as he scanned the people in the hall, was blue.

Its him, Lucy murmured to herself. Im sure its him.

Seven years had passed but Lucy knew at once. The boy standing in front of her now was the boy she saw near the lake of Marquis Everens garden. For he seemed to be the only one in the world who had such brilliant blond hair and blue eyes.

I cant believe Im seeing you here again!

Of course, she was the only one who recognized him, but the unexpected reunion made Lucy stunned.

The prince quietly cleared his throat as if he were about to begin a welcoming speech for the enrolled students. It wasnt only Lucy that was staring at him, but everyone in the hall. However, he spoke without a trace of nervousness in his voice.

Welcome to Xenomium, fellow freshmen. Youre a part of the academy as of today. My name is Adrian Berg, and I am here on behalf of the students

A pleasant mid-to-low-pitched voice echoed through the hall. Everyone sat spellbound as Prince Berg delivered his welcome speech.

Wow, hes so handsome, Colin, who rarely delivered such praises, whispered in Lucys ear.

Uhm

The more she heard Prince Bergs welcoming speech, the stranger Lucy felt. The prince, whom she remembered, was a lonely little boy, curled up on his own. But now the boy was a dignified handsome young man, standing before Lucy.

He, who seemed mature and shrewd, had no sign of the boy who had been mischievous to Lucy seven years ago.

Everyone was listening to his voice while holding their breath. But no one seemed to be focusing on the content. They only watched Prince Bergs face with fascination.

Before she knew it, his welcome speech was over.

He bowed his head politely and applauses rang in the hall. Lucy, who was sitting like a stone, clapped her hands as if she had come to her senses.

Like most people, Lucy couldn't remember exactly what he said. However, his voice, when he was saying his name, was clear in her mind.

Adrian Lucy muttered as she watched him come down from the podium.

His name is Adrian.

* * *

Well, I've decided! I'm going to join the theater club, Colin said confidently.

Yes. It suits you. Lucy, sitting next to him, responded roughly.

Despite her reaction, Colin flipped the club flier in his hand one after another, before setting them down on the table. Or how about the swordsmanship club? It looks cool!

You've never held a sword properly.

Well, I can learn from now on. Oh, wait. There's an entrance exam. Let's skip this then. Colin crumpled up the flier, then he began to concentrate on the other fliers.

There's a fortune-teller club too? It looks like fun!

Fortune-telling is complex and difficult to learn. It just looks fun. You'll be in big trouble if you go in there, Lucy said, looking pitifully at Colin, who was at a loss.

This is their third day at Xenomium Academy. They couldn't get used to the academy and were busy looking around at the wave of promotional fliers for club activities.

At the academy, club activities were as important as their studies, so they laid out fliers on the table in the break room and thought about it for a long time.

Hey, Lucy. Just join me in the theater club.

No, I'm not good at acting, Lucy refused at once, making Colin pout.

Have you thought of any place?

Lucy fiddled with a piece of paper with his question.

What the! Colin snatched the paper away. Book club? He looked into the paper and frowned. You even filled in the application form, didn't you?

Colin realized that the paper he had taken from Lucy was not a flier, but an application form, already filled with Lucy's handwriting.

Do you want to live here buried in books?

Whats wrong with that? Lucy snapped back, and snatched the application form from Colin.

Well, thats not fun! Im bored just thinking about it, Colin said, pretending to yawn on purpose. But Lucy didnt answer, and she folded the application form carefully and put it in her bag.

Why dont you read some books, too. If you come to an academy with a library that is considered to have a lot of books in the Empire, you should use it.

Im okay. Colin replied sullenly, turning his eyes to other club fliers.

Without her friend knowing, Lucy patted her chest. In fact, she was nervous that Colin would notice the real reason why she wanted to join the book club.

Adrian Berg, who made a strong impression at the entrance ceremony, became a hot topic among freshmen. His popularity was soaring day by day, with not only his handsome appearance but also his friendly personality that made many female students excited.

There were constant talks about him here and there. Thanks to them, Lucy could hear many rumors about Adrian.

He is not only the student council president of Xenomium Academy, but also the head of the book club. Moreover, he had never missed the top spot in the school year since he entered the school.

Is that possible?

The more she heard of Adrian, the more surprised she was. It was really hard for her just to prepare for the academy entrance exam.

How can he do so many things at the same time?

When she heard Adrians activities at the academy, she felt like she was listening to a monster with superhuman stamina, not a human.

And that wasnt the end of it. What surprised Lucy even more was the words about his reputation. They also praised Adrian Berg for his excellent character and polite manner.

Lucy, who had overheard them secretly, had no choice but to tilt her head.

What? Kind and humble? Him?

How could a child who used to talk nonsense about the smell of horse dung become such a perfect model student?

Sienna