



G a r d e n o f A v a l o n

K i n o k o N a s u

GARDEN OF AVALON

A NOVEL BY KINOKO NASU
TYPE-MOON
2015

fan translated edition: 003
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Not For Sale

FAQ

What is this “Garden of Avalon” I am seeing everywhere?

Merlin's NP? JK, A short novel, written by Kinoko Nasu that tells various events of iconic characters Saber, Artoria Pendragon and Court mage Merlin's life. Type-Moon's Arthurian Legend pieces featuring various characters from there, at the same time adding some of their perspectives through interlude type subchapter. It's an extension of Fate/ Stay Night, an origin story for the main heroine, Saber or Artoria, which was written when the producer of Aniplex was really curious to see Saber's past, and Nasu ended up penning something crazy (according to him). It's mostly the elaborated backstory pieces of F/SN Saber along with Merlin and other's point of view that's relevant to her role there.

Oh, that's why it sounded similar! But is this Novel really relevant in the grand scheme of Type-Moon stories or simply forgotten?

Maybe it sounded familiar because it's not forgotten and you happened to see someone mentioning it?

Despite being an extension of the story of Visual Novel Fate/Stay Night, it's still a self-contained story from the past life of a Type-Moon heroine, never mind that happened to be the main heroine of the story, a character who's called as the basis for Fate as well her legend being a writing inspiration for Kinoko Nasu, the chief author, and Co-founder of Type-Moon, nor the fact that she's the face of Type-Moon works. If people simply want to know more about a Type-Moon heroine's character, they would read it anyway. Whatever relevancy it has now really shouldn't matter.

But to answer the question, It's fairly relevant in the Type-Moon universe, more so whenever the story is surrounded by characters from Arthurian pantheons. Firstly, it tells the story surrounding one of the key characters of Fate Universe, Artoria. Secondly, a lot of lore pieces, in-depth characterization, and information related to the said character are noted in this Novel. Finally, a lot Type-Moon (fate) stories are either influenced by this book such as TypeMoon's mobile game Fate/Grand Order part 1 Chapter 6-Camelot^[1], or various lore pieces, character details are referenced from this Novel such as Chapter 7-Babylonia(Merlin's character), part 2 chapter 6-Avalon le Fay due presence of related characters or their pantheons, in some forms, and might continue to be same in future. They are very beloved chapters among mainstream audiences yet many yet haven't had the opportunity to explore more into the franchise to know more lore. Type-Moon Co-Founder & chief author, who is also the writer of this Novel, recommends this Novel whenever he gets the opportunity.^{[2],[3]} Just reading it will be fun we hope, that's all that matters at the end.

Is that why you guys finally decided to translate it after 5years of its release?

Ah, no. We don't personally care about its relevancy with the expanded universe, we worked on it for two reasons i) we simply liked reading through it and felt some fans might enjoy it too ii) it covers the origin story pieces of the character Artoria, and her mischievous 'father' Merlin, both whom we also happened to like as a character.

But isn't that like going against official support?

Well, can't say this fan translation supports official releases financially at all since this is a non-profitable translation project. But this is the luck of being a Type-Moon consumer overseas. Most of the Novels that are the foundation of the franchise, barely available there, so we have no other choice. We did wait for 5years so that Type-Moon would localize it officially, no luck yet. If you want to support it officially good luck keeping an eye over the official Japanese [Garden of Avalon Website](#). However, keep in mind that it had a very limited release with the Japanese version F/SN UBW BD release. Unfortunately, there had been no localization like various other gems of Type-Moon while also having a limited release on Japan, no further than that. That's why you don't see it available or translated completely every day. Unofficially nothing more than the Drama CD is available online aside from a few parts translated from Novel, scattered here and there.

So what about the Drama CD? Isn't listening to it should be enough?

Trying both is the optimal option. We don't think CD drama was enough for all the intention and purposes, however, it does its job we assume. The drama CD script was adapted by Yukie Sugawara and the soundtrack disc was composed by Hideyuki Fukusawa. But the Drama CD is significantly shorter in many areas, doesn't go to the Novel's depth while also cutting a lot of monologues, interactions, or lore pieces for what you'll be reading Garden of Avalon, to begin with. It's still a great listen for what it covers and you can listen to it to imagine how the characters in this Novel really sound as all characters of the Drama CD are voiced by prolific voice actors. Well to tell you the truth most people are already done enjoying the drama CD and probably you too, waiting for the Novel alone. So here we are. The drama CD tracks by Type-Moon's Hideyuki Fukusawa are absolutely mesmerizing. You can listen to it online while reading the Novel, for example on [Youtube](#) .

Is this completely perfect TL or MTL?

No, while it's a rough TL of actual Garden of Avalon along with help of MTL. It's not "completely" MTL. We aren't experts in JP either, but we could still try. It won't be perfect but you'd get a glimpse of ideas behind Garden of Avalon that's for sure. Still, you can double-check for your own accuracy and see if most are the same as how other human TL phrases or needs more correction. Even if there were some mistakes, we still tried our best through multiple edition. If you do find any errors , just inform us .We'll correct them in the future hopefully and that way it'll become more precise. But please keep in mind no translation is meant to be literal, so there's that.

Any spoiler warning?

Only on F/SN now.

May I please ask who spent time translating and compiling the whole Novel together?

Yeah, sure, few people have direct link with THIS particular project and many got indirect contributions to this project. We'll introduce most of them here but if someone prefers to be anonymous, so we'd respect his decision.

TRANSLATOR & EDITOR:

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SPECIAL CREDIT:

Translators who worked on various scattered parts in past and published their translation for those parts. Their direct or indirect contribution was important too. While we didn't get an opportunity to contact them directly, we remembered them and kept their notes in mind for further precision and allowed to use some of their notes directly, as long it was precise in our opinion. They are pretty great TL regardless and we don't blame if everyone prefers their version down to every sentence. Therefore special thanks :

For bits and pieces of chapter 00	: Canon's blog
For bits and pieces of Chapter 01	: Canon from BL*
For a good amount of parts of Chapter 01.5*	: peanuts from BL
For bits and pieces of chapter 02	: mewarmo990 from BL
For bits and pieces of chapter 02.5	: peanuts from BL
For bits and pieces of chapter 03.5	: peanuts from BL

*BL = Beast Lair Forum

*chapter x+0.5 referred here are interludes called "Story of Knights", they are not a different chapter in reality.

*In the LN Bedivere chapter, familiar trees were shown implying it as exactly the same as Continuation of the Dream ending of Fate/Stay Night. Kinoko basically telling you Saber's HGW story began here (just like the chapter before it states) and to play F/SN [Fate] for seeing what happens during that time. And if that doesn't seem convincing, the Garden of Avalon CD Drama uses a shorter version of that exact ending with the same texts too. So, we included the complete ending keeping CD drama order in mind, so that new readers who couldn't jump into VN can also get a glimpse of it since it was present in the CD drama of GOA. However, If you absolutely do not want any spoiler for F/SN then completely ignore this part. If you are already done with F/SN but want to reread under the context of F/SN then go ahead , it was included in CD drama anyway.

Disclaimer: This Garden of Avalon fan-translation project is **non-profitable** and **not for sale!** It was done without any exchange of money but with sheer passion, if anything doing this project consumed our money-earning hours lol. So, please don't exchange any money for it from 3rd party to buy this in future. Try to support an official release if you can. We just simply liked TypeMoon's Arthurian Legend Origin Novel-Garden of Avalon texts & gave our best effort possible to both translate and localize it for a comfortable read. We hope it came out readable, better than nothing. Since we are not pros, some errors might be found. We cordially request you to inform us in DM asap if you have a better suggestion, we'll gladly update it through newer editions. We tried to make it as lively as possible within what was under our grasp for a more immersive experience for readers. We understand some might not find it comfortable or decent, but in the end, these were added out of our hobby, and well we tried. So, we'd be glad if there are some people who had a good time going through it. Deeply apologize for any other inconvenience.

Edition 002: Images were trimmed for reader's convenience, one line was missed in an earlier edition while formatting chapter 00, so that was added.

Edition 003:Slight edit in FAQ. Few corrections in chapter 3 and 5.

TURN ON OST & ENJOY!

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GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 00

In the Flower Garden

花園にて

Peaceful plains dotted with flowers of every hue in full bloom.

Standing among them, the only thing that obstructed the view were the groves of trees in the distant forest, and even if one gazes around the entire sky, all that can be seen is the green earth filling the landscape in equal measure with the blue sky.

For here stood no fences made by human hands nor any homes. No walls, no castle nor any lines in the ground that men called borders of their countries.

Bright rays of spring and flavors of summer filled the air as the sun rose.

*The sky was swept by autumn winds and speckled by dazzling wintry stars by the time night fell.
On the earth dwelt many flowers and insects.*

The forests were home to water and greenery and different beasts. And upon the lake lived the graceful Fae.

What humans envisioned as paradise is merely an imitation of this realm, a land at the end of the world where they would be eternally forbidden to set foot.

Legend referred to this small world as the land of everlasting spring, "the island of apples". An ideal homeland, a utopia that could never be obtained nor reached by wiser beasts.

A realm that has no connection with the decline and destruction of the surface world that keeps repeating itself.

A foreign land that is very close to human history yet has no relationship with them.

Its name is **Avalon**. The inner sea of the stars, the other name for the place where the planet called the Earth rests its soul.

"No....I would say that's not the right word either. After all, this place is in the same coordinates as Britain, even though it is located in the reverse side of the world. A place that occupies the same space but is divided by several layers"

Someone clad in a simple-looking robe yet fashioned from the finest fabrics walked across the garden in the form of a human.

As he stood there at ease and gazed into the horizon without hesitation, the sun's rays sparkled through his long hair, kindling a rainbow of hues.

He strolled across a sea of flowers, conversing with them as if they were friends. He hums to himself without hesitation or embarrassment, without hurting a single petal that filled the ground.

From the very beginning, this man's sense of values was not of humans nor paradise and he would neither favor nor be biased with either of them.

Thus, he crossed the border with the thought, "The woman I rejected is trying to kill me, so I'm going to hide on the other side of the world for a while," and happened to stumble upon the bright idea to come across this unexplored land where there is no one else.

"But this is quite a terrible place... the magic in the air is so dense. I can't believe I'm dying just by breathing, it's just like a vacuum. Just a single breath would be enough for any living man of this era to burst from inside. This land shouldn't even be called the paradise of legend. Won't it be better employed as a weapon?"

The man was walking in the garden while speaking whatever came to his mind.

He was undoubtedly a wise man, a sage who had wandered into this foreign place.

At any rate, the man himself did not know the way back, nor did he have any place to go from here. If someone told him that this is the world after death, he will even say "I see" and just agree with it.

However, he did not hold the slightest sense of crisis because the man himself is essentially a foreign being.

The "present era" that came out of that man's mouth refers to the outside world from where the man came.

The man had left behind the soon-to-be-extinct island of a certain race in the fifth century and moved to this paradise on his own.

He was the court magus of a king, a non-human who transferred himself into this realm rather than standing alongside the King in

her final battle for exceedingly personal issues concerning a certain female.

"I see. It turned out as I thought... Mordred decided to revolt and the lords, who had been reprimanded by the king, approved. They even pressed blame on her for the harsh winters of recent years. So, the rebellion against the king, who was strict but the living embodiment of the ideal of Kingship himself, began huh."

The man walked step by step on Paradise, the flowers which he paid special attention not to trample, decreased as he advanced.

Although the island has no end, it seems to have a change of looks from land to land. The closer one gets to the end of the island, the more barren the land becomes, just like the reality called Britain.

The man pressed on, hummed, and waved his staff as he continued walking through the barren land. And curiously, flowers that were not supposed to bloom, would spring up in the imprints he made upon the ground, despite there being no traces of any use of magic or mystery.

They did not blossom from his desires to decorate the garden or a sense of sympathy towards these barren lands, a disgrace that exists even in this paradise.

No- it wasn't sadness. For this creature, sprinkling flowers as it breathes. Bringing flowers to the earth; placing dreams in the hearts of humans; ushering in simply a future for history...

That was the character and essence of the man.

His name was Merlin, the Magus of Flowers; the one among the pinnacles of the magecraft users even amidst the myriad spell-weavers of human myths and legend. The offspring of a

human woman and an incubus; and possessor of those eyes which signifies the zenith(supreme) of magi - eyes which could perceive into the world.

"Well, so they claim... but in truth, those eyes can do little more than sow more seeds. And the eyes are a little better than others but we cannot compare to others just because we see further "

Clairvoyance - the ability of the eyes to see far away even while remaining in one place.

This is the power that since ancient times, prayer masters who have been entrusted with the land from the gods must have utilized to protect the lives of the people.

No matter how massive the magic circuit is or how powerful the magic formula is, magi without this "eye" will never be considered as highest ranked.

Merlin's clairvoyance were eyes that see through the world. He was born with a sense of sight that allowed him to perceive any and all things in existence within his era, down to the smallest of details, without needing to take a single step.

Some Magi older than him even possessed eyes that could perceive into the past or the future. Of course, they were also considered as the highest rank - but the only living Magus who possessed clairvoyance was Merlin. The previous holders had brought annihilation to their own realm and disappeared from the world of men.

If "knowledge" is the most basic yet profound aspect of magic, then these clairvoyant magi were born with the ability "to know".

Although those Magi with possession of clairvoyance were born as human beings, having already reached the truth of the world

became heretics of humanity itself who never managed to obtain their human values.

How humans lived their lives is something that Merlin, who cannot see into the past, cannot know. However, he could somewhat understand their feelings.

He felt that their lives were not that interesting, regardless of how he felt about the form of human society or how it operated.

Merlin was aware of nearly all the doings and happenings occurring within his era, as well as capable of deducing how they would end.

To him, the world was no different from a “painting”.

Certainly, the "painting" called human society was worth seeing for him. He might even consider it an expression of the concept of divine miracles. However, the more interesting the piece of “painting” became, the more alienated Merlin felt when it became apparent that he had no place in it.

Simply put, as he sowed the seeds in it, he felt the sensation of alienation as a species.

The story of his life might have gone differently if there had been a fellow human being with whom he could have shared his complaints about how boring God's point of view is really.

“Just stop yourself, sit on the throne with the spirit body to mock the predecessors”, there had been times when he had such thoughts of taking his own life, ascending to the throne as a spirit, and having his predecessors laugh at him out of mockery.

No. It's better to say there had not been a single day when he did not consider it.

However, there was one responsibility that Merlin must see through to the end.

The ending of an era, of a certain nation.

The ending of their king, the one he had created and served.

"Oh, what to say, I wonder really ... the age of Gods is long past, and with what is soon to unfold, so too will the age of the Fairies end. It is the age of Man - and that too will reach its eventual conclusion sooner or later. The day will come when this star of ours ceases to rotate, after which we will establish ourselves in the heavens, beginning the age of the Will. Those incapable of volition without a frame of flesh and blood will be left behind in time. And yet... I wonder why are we so obsessed with humans."

Merlin was born from the union of a Welsh princess and an incubus, a half-human and a half incubus.

As a cambion, he could be considered a higher form of life- a being with both a spiritual nature to be parasitic upon humans and also a being capable of making predictions of the future- a creature with very odd standing.

Merlin thought If he were not such halfway creation standing on neither side, if only he had just been born as an incubus, he would have simply preferred to play in the world of the spirits.

At the same time, he felt fortunate to have the human personality he acquired, for having the blessing called individuality, and for being able to work without relying on the dreams of others, using his own dreams as nourishment.

Despite the circumstances of his birth, Merlin never came to despise humanity. If anything, he grew fond of them to an unnatural degree. Rather than allying with the Fae and the Giants - his brethren - Merlin found himself helping humans, fostering

and advising many kings, all to create a better era for them to exist.

He always had a smile on his face, even while standing amid crowds and knights, and found enjoyment in the activities of humans. He aimed to rule as he would nurture a flower - something that would lead him to go down in history as one of the greatest kingmakers to ever live.

All of this came about from Merlin's desire to complete the 'painting', a 'painting' that would make his senses feel 'beautiful'- painting with a **“happy ending”** for mankind.

There was no love for humans, much less for any single individual.

To humans, Merlin would have seemed like a nice young man but in reality, that's not how it appeared.

From a general human perspective, the nature of Merlin seemed closer to a sort of locust, an insect. He was entirely too mechanical, too objective; his thoughts advanced by leaps and bounds, so far out of context that it is incompatible with the intelligence of this planet.

Although Merlin was attracted to beautiful, pretty, exquisite things, there was no reason for him to "like" them. He was simply allowed to fill the hole in his heart with that shape, form of beautiful, pretty, exquisite things.

Merlin was a creature who loved the results that people leave behind -humanity's legacy, but also a creature who was utterly incapable of investing his feelings to feel empathy towards the actual human beings who were taking part in creating it.

“This painting is beautiful. However, I am not interested in the content of this painting, nor in the tragedy and joy of

those who created it, and I cannot find a single value in it. I don't understand what it is, but I find it beautiful.”

Clearly, he could not understand the content of the painting, yet he finds it beautiful. Merlin himself knew that this peculiar appetite or hobby was an appalling thing, but he had never been able to change it.

After all, he was born with the morals of a different kind of creature. Incubi did not evaluate the contents of the dreams they devoured, but only the nutritional value of the dream necessary for sustaining their existence.

It was no different from humans gathering at the table and eating the meals in front of them, with little thought for what great things the animals they just devoured might have once accomplished.

“I live my life by eating dreams. If I could choose, I’d much prefer the taste of happy dreams. But pragmatically speaking, if I am being practical then nightmares have a much higher nutritional value because it’s easier to find real stories within them. For happiness to overcome despair, many times more difficult of a hurdle than despairing easily. And the burden of really doing that is quite high for the dreamer

...And here we are...”

Merlin stopped, figuring that he had removed himself far enough away from the vicious claws of the wicked witch. Before he stood a gate assembled from the roughly hewn stone of such massive size as to bring to mind the Stonehenge, huge stone gates from Britain.

Beyond the gate laid the same wilderness of barren plain, no different than before. A single sentence was carved into the gate: **"Only the sinless may pass."**

" I see, you got me. I've been tricked already."

Merlin shrugged and made no attempts to avoid the gate, simply walking under it and sowing his flowers as he always did.

As soon as he did, the barren plains he stood on changed dramatically. Thick walls of stone sprang from the earth as though to entrap the guest, stretching skyward without limit and sealing in the Magus. Merlin stood in the center of this seemingly infinitely tall stone tower and turned around to find that the gate had disappeared. He was surrounded by stone walls on all sides - caged in a five square meter space carved from paradise itself.

That was the true nature of this bounded field and it appeared someone who hates Merlin has made a deal so that he will not be allowed to leave this tower for the rest of his life.

"A curse of this scale can't be established if you don't trade your life for it, isn't it? It's scary. Strange, I have no memory of offending that girl that I would be hated to this degree. Since I don't remember, well, I'll just ignore it, surely it must not have been anything important."

"Only the sinless may pass."

The reason Merlin still stepped through the gate understanding it was a trap, was because he could not suffer those words full of pain, it hurt him.

After all, Merlin wished a happy ending for humanity, but he did not essentially love humans. So, he has consumed many human lives as if they were insects in the name of bringing happiness and prosperity.

There was no such concept as right or wrong, likes or dislikes, evil or good. Therefore, no guilt, nor sensation of sin.

Even let him feel like the only one in the world deserving of the so-called 'sinless' word and believing that the gate's words must be referred to him specifically.

In the big picture, it can be argued that Merlin was fond of human beings.

That is why he has been actively involved in the human world and has enjoyed it in his own way like a happy relationship. He merely lent his hand to help humanity and fashioned them kings, but he felt neither responsibility nor guilt for what would befall the countries after - **at least, not until he heard the *parting words of a single girl*.**

"Yeah well. I suppose I can't help it."

The man sat down on the only rocky outcrop in the cramped solitary room.

It was far too stiff to be considered a proper seat, but putting himself on it granted the perfect height by which to gaze through the solitary window in the wall. Only now did he fully realize the purpose of his visit here. What could be seen through the window was not the Britain of reality; however, to Merlin, any view was the same as he would be able to perceive all the events of the entire era through it. The Magus of Flowers went through the

drafts and summaries he had made in life thus far and drew from the depth of his robe a hidden familiar - **Cath Palug**.

“The last sight is almost here - so before that, let us talk a little of the old days.”



GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 01

Morning of Choice

選定の朝

Morning rays tickled her eyelids as they seeped through the gaps in the door, waking her up.

Her surroundings were still dimly lit, filled with the scent of several creatures and the smell of pasture.

The blanket..... probably the work of her adoptive brother, was hardly placed upon her to keep her body away from the cold.

Noticing the blanket, she remembered it was a stable. She had been so concerned with the condition of the newborn foal that she stayed with it the entire night, until morning, because of the poor condition it was in last night.

————— ***“ I shouldn't! I'm going to let Ector get stuck again!”***

The sweet face of her adoptive father, who had adopted her and raised her for fifteen years, came first.

She hastened to store the blankets neatly, straightened her clothes, and fed the horses their morning meal one by one.

The day started with the first task of day-to-day works| After finishing the morning care of the horses, she headed to the backyard of the house where her foster father, Ector, was waiting for her.

It is her and Ector's custom to take a few bites of nourishment early in the morning, practice sword fighting, and keep fighting on an empty stomach before going to breakfast.

————— ***"Hear me, Eto! Yesterday, I finally managed to land a blow on Éctor... Well... In truth, I pushed him just a few steps, however, isn't that***

enough to make a difference in the ruthless battlefield! It's not like your opponent couldn't trip over a tree root like this and drop. If a condition like that is attached to it, I'm sure it is my victory... I guess it's a bit."

She says it cheerfully while brushing the thick fur coat of her father's beloved horse, Eto.

Her foster father, Ector, was the toughest and most stubborn knight she had ever known.

He never gained much honor on the battlefield, and he never once sought fame, so people never gossiped about him, but when it came to that girl he was Ector, the very ideal of knighthood.

Although he retired from the first line because of the passage of time besting all men, his sword skills did not deteriorate.

————— ***"I'm sure you'll be happy to know that I managed to get my father to groan... But lately, I've seen many distressed faces... I'm worried that a person like Ector can look so depressed.... My adoptive father, who was also a strict teacher, has become less strict these days."***

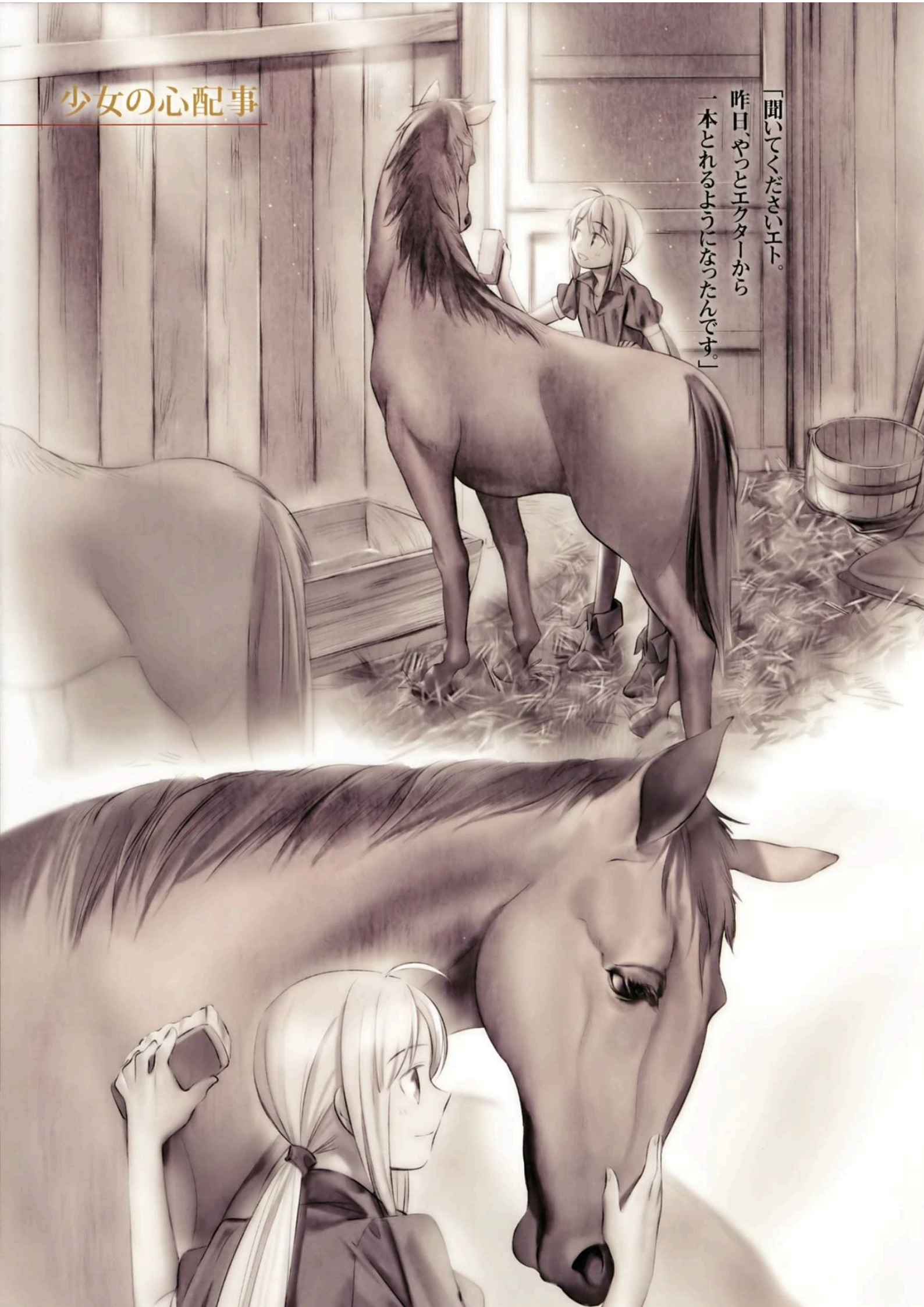
The face of a devil teacher who has always graded her behavior and took note of them and warned her to pay particular attention to his errors, now often looks at her with an indescribable, unspeakable expression on his face.

————— ***"I wanted to solve Ector's problems one way or another, but there was only so much I could do as a trainee knight....."***

少女の心配事

「聞いてくださいエト。」

昨日、やっとエクターから
一本とれるようになったんです。」



————— ***“Ector, please tell me if you are having problems! I can help you with everything except cutting down the amount of food I eat! Does that have something to do with the body?”***

She asked Ector what was wrong and he responded,

“----Mum, it's probably just your imagination. My body will be fit for another ten years. But Artoria, my lord, I can't say I'm up for anything with that suggestion. After all, it seems you're not quite ready to do 'everything' to help.”

He replied in his usual matter-of-fact way.

As usual, she got the same thin response.

It was good to know that Ector's body was healthy, but that didn't stop her from wondering what was bothering her, gradually she became more and more worried about what was bothering him. It piqued her attention even more.

Eto, the cherished horse of her adoptive father, placed its long cheek on hers.

————— ***"It was in the middle of a fight when I first spotted him. I'm sure it's Brother Kay causing trouble again! Even Ector can't seem to get rid of his foul mouth!"***

She smiled bitterly as she stroked the back of her adoptive father's beloved horse and left the stable.

She was greeted by a meadow lit up by the morning sun when she opened the wooden door

Ector's house was on the outskirts of town, distant from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Despite his preference for solitude, Ector did not despise people, and she was well aware that she was the reason her adoptive father had selected such a location in the first place.

The first thing she wanted to do was apologize to Ector, but doing so would be disrespectful to his dignity. As a knight, Ector performed his duties. He chose to quit the active arena of knights after adopting and caring for her as a knight should. She must not repay that action of his by showing a sense of guilt.

She had always been grateful for the emotional optimism she had for Ector, in the present, and the past.

It's not as if he's a bad person.

—————***"Not at all, but..."***

In reality, she only had one complaint about Ector. Her foster father would never let her address him as "father". He would never allow it.

As a result, she could never have the chance to experience what it sounded like to pronounce that word with a loving voice.

In the backyard, the elderly knight awaited her. He was still the same stern figure who greeted her and taught her the logic of the sword. It was a sincere lesson that he had been teaching her every day for the past ten years since she could hold a sword. It was the truth, and it would stay that way until today, her final day.

—————***"Sorry I'm late, Ector, I overslept!"***

She took her wooden sword and shoved the slices of bread Ector had prepared into her mouth.

---“I don't think you slept all night and overslept if you have so much energy. Good. I will train you this morning without a care in the world.”

The old knight, calm as always, held up his wooden sword and guarded with it in extremely natural movements.

His eyes were compassionate, and his soft face was burdened down with regret as if he were gently bidding farewell yet hesitant to let go of the creature in front of him.

And she continued, pretending not to notice.....

She had heard that the town was having a special festival today. Kai rode Ector's horse to the festival, but he forgot to bring his most valuable weapon as a knight, his lance.

—————“I'm sorry, but even if it's my brother, is it possible for a knight to forget his lance?”

----“Hmm. Cavalry warfare has long since fallen into disuse. There are just farm animals and a few warhorses left these days. The only thing I had left in my family was this item, which is why I couldn't teach you my talents.”

—————“Was it the reason? You could have made any number of imitations.”

-----“It's you who wants to utilize it. I can't allow you to have such a lousy product... It's acceptable if it's a sword. The Great Magus informed me that if it's a spear, you can't acquire a duplicate. He seemed to be implying that if you develop a strange habit by mistake, it will be bad.”

————— ***“I'm not going to get into any funny habits. You want me to deliver this to Brother Kay?”***

---“Just deliver it to him. Your work for today is done.”

Nodding to Ector, she borrowed a horse and put her brother's belongings on its back, and headed for town.

She got off the hill where Ector's house was located, crossed the meadow, and walked in the fields.

Though the sky was somewhat cloudy, there was no need to worry about rain. Thinking of her brother's face, she suppressed her impatience and headed for the town at her usual pace. She couldn't push herself too hard since she was carrying a hefty weight.

————— ***“..... I wasn't able to see anyone. It's harvest season, but no one is around, and it's quite..... lonely.”***

She switched her focus to the forest in the distance after glancing over the familiar farmland.

The forest had been a bountiful hunting ground until last year.

The hunters would enter the forest to hunt and return with only the amount of meat and fruits required.

However, it is no longer used as a hunting site. Foreign tribes have penetrated that forest and are progressively encroaching on the lives of the Britons.

You would lose your life today instead of obtaining food for tomorrow if you entered the jungle on a whim and were unlucky enough to confront them.



The 5th century on Britain Island.

The island of Britain was in disarray.

It all started with the collapse of the great empire on the continent. The power of Britain, which had been under the protection of the empire until then, was waning.

The upheaval on the mainland had brought new enemies to the shore of the Island.

The Saxons crossed the sea in search of food, clothing, and land to live on.

Britain was an island country controlled by a plethora of tribes and their lords (kings). Despite endless conflicts and disagreements among the tribes, the lords of the tribes banded together to protect themselves against invasion from the north due to the fight with the Pictish people.

The kings of the tribes cooperated in preparation for an invasion from the north.

However, one of the kings threw a wrench into this unity.

That king interfered with the unity of the tribes by using foreign tribes to achieve his desire: to unite Britain. Vile king **Vortigern** was this traitorous king. He was the manifestation of the white dragon that arose within Britain with the intent of destroying it.

Vortigern was the one who invited the Saxons into the mainland and plunged them into chaos. The fortified city of Londinium, the cornerstone of Britain, built when the Empire once ruled the island, was destroyed.

In a fight against Vortigern, Uther Pendragon, known as the greatest of kings, was vanquished. After that, he hid his appearance from the crowd forever.

Vortigern the Usurper gave land to the Saxons and gave them a rest, and though he temporarily silenced the foreign invasion by giving them rest, countless kings continued to rebel.

Thus, Britain entered the Dark Ages.

Warfare had long been a part of everyday life. The island was not a rich land, to begin with, and crops on the island were scarce. People's lives were worsening day by day, getting worse and worse, and it was clear that if things continued in this manner, they would soon destroy themselves.

The people, on the other hand, have not given up hope. Merlin, the renowned magus who had served as King Uther's advisor and defender of Britain, told the people that everything had happened exactly as it had been prophesied.

---"King Uther's successor has been chosen. That individual will be the future king."

---"The new king, the advent of the Red Dragon, will now gather the Knights of the Round Table, while the White Dragon will be defeated."

---"The king is still alive and well, and that proof will come soon."

Merlin's words spread throughout the island.

The people were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the future king.

The knights felt reassured by those words, but in their heart, they also felt restless wondering if they might not be chosen as the king.

Vortigern was looking for the king's successor even more fiercely.

That was a decade ago.

In reality, this year will mark the fifteenth birthday of King Uther's heir.

Everyone was buzzing with anticipation as they made their way to the knights' training grounds on the outskirts of town.

In a frantic race, children were sprinting ahead of their peers.

The grownups, whose eyes twinkled with excitement, were holding their breath to prevent disappointment if their expectations were not met.

"It's Merlin!"

"Merlin has arrived!"

"Today, on this day, the heir to the throne will finally be chosen from among the knights!"

That explains why the community is in such a tizzy, she agreed.

Calmly, she realized what Ector meant when he sent her away.

*---"Oh, it's **Artorius**. What exactly are you doing here? Are you sure it's okay for you to be lounging around here? A knight is a knight, even if he is a trainee. You might have an equal chance, you know?"*

When a well-known young guy approached her, she nodded in agreement as if to say, "That's true."

Out in the open, she presents herself as a teenage boy. No, since she was born, she has been raised as a "man".

Her hair is pulled back and she dresses in men's attire. Because of her beauty, she was immensely popular with the town's females, but because she was an orphan raised by an elderly knight, she was never considered a knight partner by the other knights.

Even though she had a slender body, she was able to pass herself off as a male until she was fifteen, but after that, it can no longer be kept secret.

She's currently an apprentice knight, but at this pace, she won't even be considered a follower Squire. The girl's physique makes it impossible for her to hold a sword or go into battle.

—————***"I need to be there as quickly as possible. I'm leaving right now. I need to bring something to Brother Kay."***

---“What's that, a Lance ?? Why would you even need a weapon? Yesterday when Lord Merlin came, he said. “The man who draws the sword stuck in this rock is the King of Britain!”

“The great magus said the sword stabbed on the rock is the holy sword that calls for victory, the proof of the king that is more certain than blood.

In the eyes of the great magus, blood has no meaning.

The sword only recognizes those who have authority, those who can defend Britain.”

ウーサー王は
後継者を選ばれている。
この人物こそが次の王。

赤き竜の化身、
新たな王が現れた時こそ
円卓の騎士たちは集結し、
白き竜は敗れ去る。



マーリンの言葉

—————"I see, so it's like the sword of selection, isn't it?"

"Yeah. Ahhh, thanks to this it was so noisy since dawn. The whole kingdom is populated with famous knights yelling 'I am the king' and arriving here to obtain the throne!"

Vortigern must have been unaware of this yesterday. The girl was not sure what to do at this point but she was certain she would be able to figure this out eventually.

Kay, her brother, is also the son of once-famous Ector, is well within his rights to challenge the sword of choice.

Many knights who wanted to revive Britain, and who wanted the throne as their greatest wish, were gathering in this town. The sword was stuck in the rock, and one by one, the knights were rejected as they tried to pull it out.

People crowded around the selection arena, watching in fascination. While the knights, with solemn expressions on their faces, placed their hands on the sword's hilt, dropped them, and walked away.

They toss it aside and walk away.

Some knights, who refused to give up, attempted again and again. Some knights grumbled and yelled that something was wrong with it. A knight appeared to be capable of lifting the entire rock. Some knights bragged of their power and claimed to be able to move mountains let alone that rock.

The sword, however, would not fall, no matter who it was. The man who was meant to serve the king, Merlin, was nowhere to be seen.

“——What?!”

The feeling of disappointment did not just affect the knights, but also the general public.

“Are there no knights in this country who bear the hallmark of a king?”

“Is there no future for Britain?”

“And then again, was Merlin's prophecy even true in the first place?”

The knights, sensing the unease in the crowd, began to consult.

In any case, there are so many knights gathered here. There are many ways to choose a king. The best one will succeed Uther as king of the knights, inheriting from the previous king.

"All we need to do now is measure our abilities as knights, and the finest among them should be picked to succeed the former King."

The knights decided to ignore the sword of selection that had not chosen them and began making a selection process that was convenient for them. First and foremost, there was horse combat.

"If you're a true knight of honor, it's only natural to ride a horse and fight a surprise duel with a lance."

She was in a foul temper as she lacked a spear. She spotted her brother standing unhappily without his spear, and discreetly walked over to him and handed it to him as unobtrusively as possible.

—————"Is the chosen sword not good, Brother Kay? Is it just going to be ignored?"

"It's neither good nor bad. There's nothing that can be done. It's just a nuisance to have as long as no one can pull it out. The knights are going to have a tournament. This will be a good place to start. I'm sure many of the knights are smiling and shouting 'hooray!' inside "

—————"Even though the king wasn't chosen?"

"We don't have time to dream with Merlin and Uther. It's more humane to judge by how many men, money, and power you have now than by the invisible proof of the king. There is no need for a powerful leader. If the interests of each other are the same, it is easier to work together, to calculate what is also relatively simple. The most important thing is that in case something goes wrong and you have to take responsibility, you can also muddle through. The reason is that no matter who you are, you don't want to see or be the 'agent of the god who saves everything.'"

—————"Do you think the same too, brother Kay?"

"Of course I do. Artoria, You must return to father. If the other knights discover you, they'll bully and mock you once more."

"You should think about how hard I work to help you out all the time. Listen up. This is your first and last chance to go home."

Brother Kay had already taken his lance and set up to the venue of the cavalry battleground to see which among the Knights would be the greatest. For the time being, they were the leaders. The atmosphere changed. It had been so bustling up until now, but suddenly not a single one of them was present. Not a single person approached the sword that was stuck in the stone

The number of persons who believed in the prophecy became debatable. As if the sword had never existed in the first place, it was cast aside.

The knights had departed, as had the populace.

————— ***"No one wants to see, no one wants to be..."***

She didn't blame people for moving on, and she didn't argue with her foster brother's point of view since she had accepted that it was natural to think that way.

Her origin is both complicated and unique.

'Why have I been falsely living under the pretense of a man named Artorius?'

'Why did I have to learn the sword, learn the affairs of state, and overcome my feelings as a human being since I can remember anything?'

'It's obvious.'

It was all for this day. To draw the King's Sword, she was born.

She never knew how her real parents were nor their faces.

The king and the great magus had the goal of making the "ideal king", and the one who was planned and born for that purpose was herself.

In reality, she could neither relate nor empathize with her late father's regrets or wishes.

She was not moved by the magus' teachings, nor did she have a special sense of mission.

For the past fifteen years, it was the ordinary, simple everyday life with her adoptive father Ector and foster brother Kay that encouraged and nurtured her, as well as the lively voices of the town's residents.

It was neither longing nor love.

It was just that those things seemed like something good and beautiful.

"I want to become a habitant of the city" or "I want to join the community's everyday circle", she possessed no such hope.

Even though she occasionally painted such a scene in her mind, she just calmly put the lid on it.

She knew from the bottom of her heart that if she did that, she would lose everything that way.

As a child, she was not the brightest, but she was the most hard-working, and so she told herself she could not do that, it wasn't going to happen.

Like a person being born as a person.

A dragon has a role to play.

————— "It's a shame you can't talk about it without badmouthing.-----But thank you, big brother Kay. In the end, my brother's words taught me a good lesson. But, I'm really sorry. I don't know what kind of ideal king Ector was talking about."

彼女の生い立ちは
特別で複雑なものだった。

なぜ男と偽って暮らしているのか。

なぜ物心ついた時から

剣を習い、国を学び、

人としての自身の感情^{のぞみ}を

打ち消してきたのか。

決まっている。



定められた運命

No, she understood what kind of person a King is. She could put it into practice. She'd been taught how to do it and given the best qualities, she could have.

But still, what a miscalculation...Till the end she couldn't bear that she was "that sort of child".

Her motivation was something different from that of the late King Uther.

She had no desire to rule as a person, no sense of duty as a ruler, no euphoria nor the intoxication that comes from faith.

「Her drive force was a tiny little thing. 」

The past fifteen years of not being able to live a human life had been all she had ever needed.

She had desired nothing more than spending a life of a simple human being for these previous fifteen years.

--“There was only one reason to take up the sword.”

--“Just looking at people's lives gives me strength. It pushes my back to keep going forward.”

--“Even if someone does not say a word out loud, I can affirm what I want to do without being told by anyone.”

A very human answer the girl named Artoria gently nurtured inside , an answer full of humanity to the call for a king

She quietly places her palm on the hilt of her sword.

In the distance, the sound of gallant cavalry.

The clamor of the knights was far away, and there was no one around the rock.

..... Similar sensation of watching a festival from the outside.

It wasn't the first time this had happened.

She'd always been on the outside of the festival. So it wasn't like a particularly awful experience for her.

The hilt of the sword felt surprisingly comfortable in her hand. By far it was difficult to deal with. Something in her body that had been holding her back was being sucked into the sword as if it was about to burst from the inside, and her body felt lighter and lighter.

The sword would fall out if she just pulled her hand away.

----"It's better to think carefully before picking up that thing."

When she turned around, she discovered a wizard-like person she had never seen before standing behind her.

-----No, I've met him countless times before. It's just that it's the first time we've met face-to-face in real life, that's all.

The great magus spoke to her as he had done so far.

----"I'm not going to say anything bad, but you better stop."
He reproves.

"Once you pick that sword up, you will no longer be able to live a human life until the end."

"That's not all, though. You will be resented by all people if you accept it, and you will die a miserable death."

マーリンの予言

「悪いことは言わないから
止めた方がいい。
それを手にしたが最後、
君は人間ではなくなるよ。」

それだけじゃない。
手にすればあらゆる
人間に恨まれ、
惨たらしい死を迎えるだろう」



Without a doubt fear distorted her face.

The magus' words were replayed in her mind, but as an image, a vision of what would happen.

Not as a piece of advice, but as a piece of prophecy.

No matter how hard she struggles, she would suffer a lonely and brutal death if she drew the sword.

◆(Merlin)

"Thinking back, at that time I wondered, why would she do anything like this at this point?"

"The plan I made with Uther did not include this prophecy."

"The chosen ritual was supposed to be simple and was originally intended to give her a push."

"In any case, what was to be done had to be done."

"She would fear for her future and change her mind. She would probably either be terrified that she was not ready to be a king yet and wait for the future to try again."

"Or maybe she will simply run away from the path of becoming a king in the first place?"

It doesn't matter in any case.

The magus thought that the selection of the king would be a matter for another time.

"Yet....."



_____ **"No-----"**

This drove her to make her final resolve.

"Are you sure?" asked the magician.

Her golden sandy hair floated in the breeze without turning around, never losing its luster even in this strange land.

She gave a strong nod.

..... In reality, she was still scared at the moment.

It wasn't that she was afraid of her own ending. It was fear of whether this decision was the right one.

Fear of the young king who pulls the sword from the rock –
"Isn't there someone more suitable than her to be the promised king? Shouldn't he be able to build a more peaceful Kingdom?", such was her fear.

But such a person did not exist, at least not for another few decades.

Until then, someone else will have to take over this role.

『When you will pick up the sword, you will become a different person.』

『Everything that you were afraid of will be left in the past.』

『A ritual that kills yourself.』

『If you have a human heart, you cannot protect people as a king.』

『A king, in other words, is the one who kills the most in order to protect everyone.』

As a young girl, she thought about it every night and lay in her bed trembling until dawn.

There hadn't been a single day that she had not been afraid of these facts.

But the young girl declared, that too will end today.

No matter how many times she will be alienated, feared, or even betrayed, her heart will not change.

「To live for people.」

「To live with people.」

「To leave a future for people.」

That's what it means to be in charge of a country, to show the King's testimony.

To live up to the duties of a king, she said goodbye to the most important things she saw in her life.

To live for the most precious thing to her, she chose to say goodbye to all the precious things she had ever seen in her dream.



“Many people were smiling... Certainly this path I don't think is the wrong one.....”

Who could've known about that noble oath?

「-- is resolved to fight」

No matter what happens, even if it's beyond

「----- Even so, I decided to fight.」

Even if an inescapable, solitary ruin awaits.

"Ahhh, you've drawn the sword? You've chosen the difficult path, haven't you?"

The magus turned his face away in annoyance, but inwardly he was thrilled by her choice. Because it was very interesting to him. The magus, however,

was convinced that the path she was taking was both difficult and full of ups and downs.

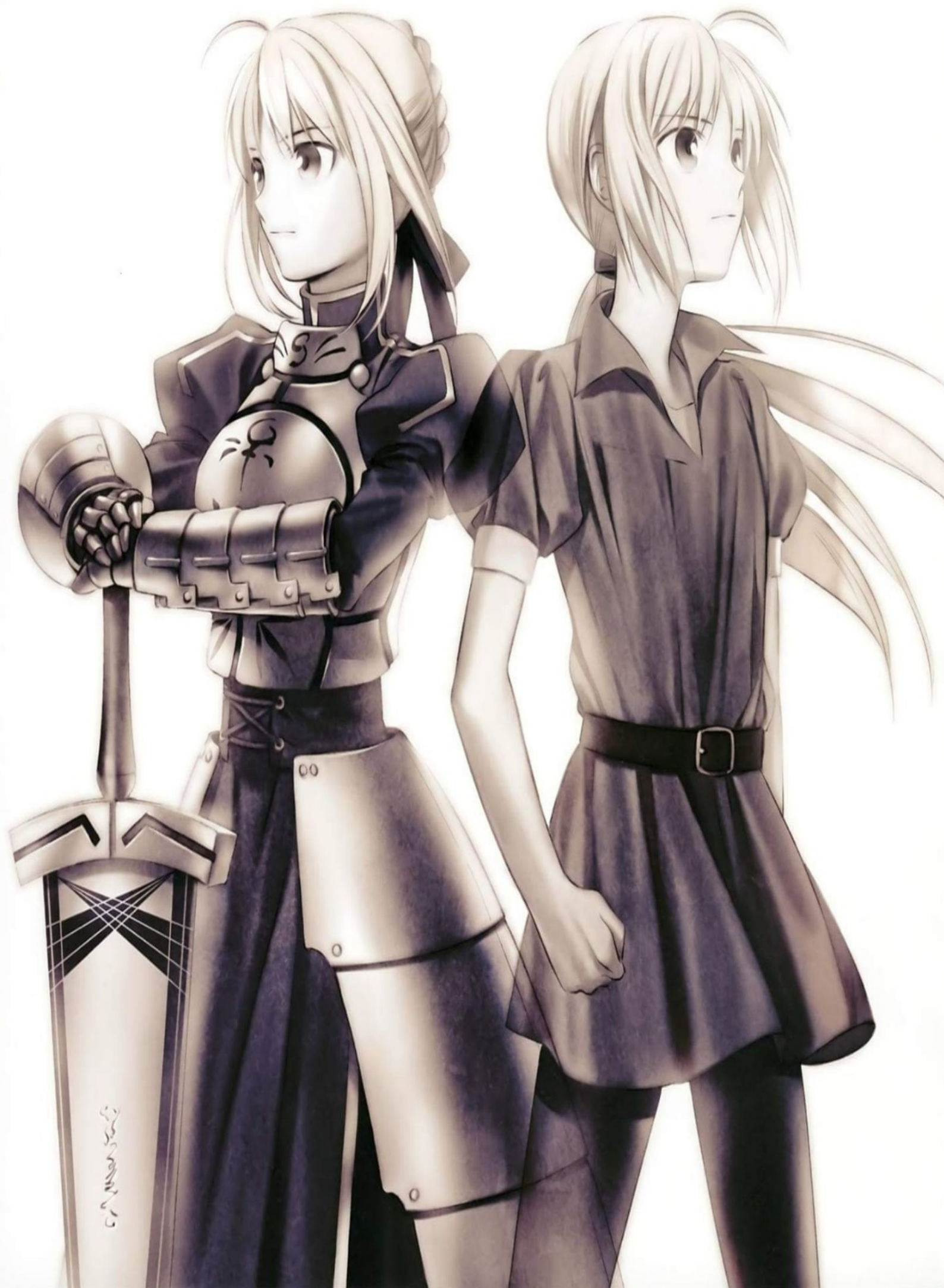
But the man just wanted to see something beautiful.

So, innocently or perhaps wickedly, he was willing to give it to her.

「Even still, miracles require a necessary price」

「O King Arthur, would you trade that for your most precious thing?」

To the new king, he shrewdly offered the first advice that did not concern him.



GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 1 Interlude

STORY OF KNIGHTS

騎士たちの話

Sir Kay

I don't like old stories.

If I had to go into more detail, I'd say I don't have a soft spot for anything other than my own past. What's the fun in listening to other people brag? I'd rather be swimming with salmon if I had time for that. No, I'm not saying I like salmon. If I have to swim, it really should be with a woman, and better be a good-looking woman at that. If all you want is to listen to me talk and tell a story though, I will bear with it a bit. *I'll just imitate a poet.* With practice, it would be of use when wooing a woman who's easy to deceive.

Five years; that's when we became family.

Not my age, hers. At first sight, I knew immediately that she'd become a beauty in the future, but then my old man told me to guide her as if she were my brother, and that's how I decided to see her.

I didn't think there was any chance in hell it could be kept a secret though.

King Uther was a man above other men, but *still a human* in the end. He probably knew that he would fall to the Picts in the North and in the coming battle against Vortigern, to say nothing of the Saxons.

So, he came up with the idea of making the next king, not one who was merely above other men, but something that was **NO** man. A hybrid between man and dragon. The incarnation of the king, born in the mold of a human body.

Merlin was delighted with the idea. He must have been running throughout the castle with his hands up in the air with approval. ***What, don't add fuel to the fire if you didn't see it?? I'm not guessing. I'm certain that's what happened. You magus and your lot love the new, the chaotic, the unimaginable.***

Continuing on, the raw material of the king was made in this way without letting others know. The blood of King Uther, the blood of the dragon, and the blood of a noblewoman who's the most suitable to fuse the two. *There wasn't a trace of romance in it.* No exchange of letters, no secret meetings at night; just an act for leaving behind results. **What? You ask if there was love in that? You seriously think there was love in it?** It's because you don't even know that kind of thing that you are inhuman.

And that was how **Arto** — *King Arthur* was born.

They call it conceptual fertilization in the magecraft world or so I hear. I'm sure you heard of it. Not making a dragon a man, but giving a man the functions of a dragon. She may have been a human being at first, but there's something unnatural mixed inside.

"The King is not the incarnation of the dragon; his heart is a single dragon. His magical power is of a level beyond ours. I ask you not to seek the same values as ours from one possessing magic like the gods."

That's what **Agravain** would regularly say to the knights, but I concur, not as much as he may have meant of course.

No one under those conditions would grow up into being a normal human being. You wouldn't expect it normally. Yet, that's what wasn't normal about her. Everything else about her was normal when she was a runt except that one thing was weird. It might feel hard to believe now, but she had been no different from the other girls in town. She'd been disciplined to be polite by the old man and etiquette drilled into her bones, but once in town, she blended in, became just like her surroundings. She was a town girl, a simple town girl.

But her being a sore loser was a trait she was born with. Her standard for winning and losing was not that she was

disappointed to lose to someone else, but that she was pathetic, sore at being so useless.

Whenever she falls down, she would immediately stand face up. She wasted no time consoling herself. There should be a limit to the spirit of moving forward. And yet, she's easily hurt. She must have been too honest to brush things off.

The knights outside of the castle talk as if she has a heart of iron, but she was reed, not iron. She was shocked and battered, but not once has her heart broken. A girl like that was raised for ten years under the strict watch of my old man. So of course, she would become an ideal king. It was nothing but trouble from me, however.

I wasn't there to see her pulling the sword. A part of me thought 'just let her do whatever she pleases'.

After all, why should I have to warn a cheater who had everything since she was born? I had no reason to stop her. She can do whatever she wants for all I care.

You should know more than me about what happened next. And you won't have me talking of the days when we were training and adventuring countries after she took out the sword. I might find myself swinging a blade at you from years of pent-up grudges if I remember all of the trouble you and her dragged me into and made a fool out of me.

When she finished her training and mastered Caliburn, she finally announced herself the rightful king. She had humble beginnings.

First, she started with saving a tribe and establishing a base of

operations. The old man did teach her that laying groundwork was critical.

If we were to defeat Vortigern, it was ideal to raise an army to match his while being as low profile as possible in order to remain unnoticed.

To date, there have been eleven pitched battles against the Saxons, but the Round Table at the very first of them consisted of only you and me I believe.

From there, everything took off.

She reorganized the lost cataphract and literally raced across the battlefield freely, crushing Saxon infantry and breaking through several city walls.

Really, it's a tactic that none could've imagined that girl who loved taking care of horses would use. What? You're saying that people were dying too? It's fine if soldiers die. They were fighting to protect their families and their land. It's an act of survival. But horses are different. They have nothing to do with human conflicts. They don't care what they are running for or what they are dying for. That is a different sin from the death of humans. At least that's what that girl thought.

It was when she emerged victorious from one of those battles that the name of King Arthur became known throughout the island.

Ah, but somewhere along the way, someone's womanizing led her to Morgan's trap and sword of the selection(Caliburn) was lost. **What!? You must go through that ritual to obtain the golden sword (Excalibur)?** Who cares? I can only remember how *ridiculous* she looked as she marched with us trying to conceal from everyone that she had lost her holy sword. Her face was paler than pale can be.

Because of that, I ended up once again having to make a wood carving of a bird catching a salmon.

And, Morgan was there too. How did such a fine lady become such a frightening thing? Just when it seemed as if she had the innocence of a fairy, she became as magnificent as a warrior maiden, and then suddenly possessed the brutality of a witch.

If you ask me, it's as if there were three women inside of that single woman.

Still, she was the proper daughter of King Uther. Morgan may have had similar circumstances as she had.

Ever since the establishment of Camelot, she never let go of her hatred for King Arthur.

Come to think of it, I've not heard much of her lately.

But yes, let me get back to where I was.

Vortigern finally lifted his heavy hand and started to fight a decisive battle against King Arthur. That was when she took back the citadel that was Vortigern's base. Though in this battle, the only one other than King Arthur who was of any use was Sir Gawain ,who had a holy sword just like her.

And so King Arthur defeated Vortigern the Usurper and reclaimed the citadel. That would be this chalk castle, Camelot of the Round Table. Camelot Castle was completed, and the reign of King Arthur began at last.

Since then, **ten years** have gone by. There'd never been a moment to breathe, for both you and me. You fooled around with women while calling yourself the aid of the king, and I'd chase after women's asses in leisure while performing my duties as one of the Round Table. And King Arthur, she would bring and bind together a group of bickering lords while accomplishing great

results against the war against the Saxons.

So, just like Uther the previous King had wished for, the ideal king was born.

Meanwhile, my worries have amounted to nothing. I thought there would be at least one of us who would voice his thoughts, but **“at this point”** there was not a single knight who would press further into **what a lie** that was. The joke of "A knight of innocence who serves the chalk castle" is not even funny a story nowadays.

After all, no one truly approved of King Arthur. Because, you know... The power of the holy sword has made her stop aging. The king looks like a fifteen-year-old just like when he drew the sword. Although many knights feared it as creepy, most of them hailed the immortality of their lord as a mystery.

Deep down inside, they mocked the notion of a young boy being a king for much longer and readied themselves for the power struggles that would come when the king falls. King Arthur was not a king universally acknowledged. She was a temporary king who was only recognized when her reign was going well.

As long as she could function as a king, some "incompatibility" could be ignored. Even if there were ones who discovered what the king truly was, they stayed quiet while she still proved to be a capable king.

They praised her as an ideal king, but as soon as they realized that her ideals that they so praised would not save absolutely everyone, they pushed all the blame on her.
And look where it led us.

I imagine Mordred will raise troops against us when King Arthur returns from Rome.

I've had enough of this foolish infighting. I'll think of some reason to excuse myself from it all. Perhaps join up with that other fellow womanizer, Lancelot — I, no. That is the one thing I will never do. It's fine, I'll set off sail for some other land and spend my days relaxing there. With all that fortune I've amassed, I have no need to fight anymore.

And you, you will be fleeing to some fairyland, won't you? Best to end this idle talk lest you have your head chopped off for being an opportunist.

What? You want to hear what I think of King Arthur?

...Yeah, there is one thing I wanted to ask you. Since she had been aware, and she's spent most of her day learning to be a king. And the sole free time she had, the time she should be sleeping, she spent taking care of the needs of the horses and patrolling the village. In her life, she had no room for herself, never personally experienced what it was she trying to protect. Is there anything more heartbreaking than that?

I am a man who will cut off the head of a giant if asked, but even I frowned not being able to look at this.

When we were still living with my father, I couldn't help but having to speak my mind, because I was so disgusted:

“Hey you! when are you sleeping?”

—————***“Don't worry, big brother. I am asleep from dawn until the sun rises.”***

She actually smiled when she said that.

Dawn until the rise of the sun. That's not even three hours. I was dismayed, but it served as a good opportunity for me to learn that a mundane person like I will never get anything good coming from being involved with this overly-serious fool.

But then some days later, I met you and learned a truth I did not want to know. That a magus, one who was an incubus, was teaching her how to be a king in even her dreams.

“What a joke. In other words, she hadn't even been truly sleeping.”

No one else knew though.

Because of that, now that I see the country on the edge of falling I find myself thinking

“Absurd. What was it that she wanted to do so much to go that far?”

GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 02

Starlight

星の光

After defeating Vortigern, King Arthur set out to rebuild the fortified city that had been destroyed. The city regained its former mystique and was revived as the Chalk City of Camelot with the return of the Holy Sword Owner.

The decade between the building of Camelot and the battle of Camelot's Hill is referred to be King Arthur's reign over Britain.

Despite the fact that war with the foreign tribes introduced by Vortigern continued, the decade was mostly stable.

The battle with the Picts in the north had ended, the Saxons' momentum had weakened, and the friendship between the knights, who were now lords, had been preserved.

It could be claimed that this is the world's final period of romance. It's a period of twilight when there were still mysteries, magic, fairies, and phantasmal spirits lingering on the Island. It was during this period in which most of the legends of the Knights of the Round Table took place.

————— ***"A service room is lovely, but isn't it a little too extravagant?"***

————— ***"This is not much different from the Round Table Room. I favor a plain style with no unnecessary decoration....."***

With a sluggish gaze, she rested her palms on the wooden table.

The innovative and precise design of the mirror-like table is polished to a shine.

For her, who had spent her entire life on the battlefield, life at the castle appeared far too lavish for her to remain still.

"King Arthur, living a life of luxury is part of the king's duties. Camelot was built by fairies, not you humans, for the most part. So, what's the problem? It's not like it was built with the hard-earned money of the people."

————— ***"If that's correct then the one who is laboring day and night to repair the castle is....."***

"Half of them are earth fairies disguising as humans, while the other half is human craftsmen who are well aware that they are earth fairies but pretend not to notice."

————— ***"What! I heard that the fairies had gone to Fairyland, leaving only giants and magical beasts who despise people."***

"Well. The fairies can still enter and exit even if they have fled to the other side of the world."

"However, the door will vanish soon. Because of their preconceptions, the giants despise mankind. They are unable to liberate themselves from their physical ties. They can't take on the form of a spirit as fairies can."

"As a result, they are unable to migrate to the opposite side of the globe and must remain on Earth in this condition. They must live in fear of being eliminated by humans and civilization, and they can only survive in fear."

————— ***"What about dragons? For example, where is the dragon that protects Britain?"***

She posed the question out of genuine curiosity.

Not because she resonates with that being, nor because she feels sorrow for her parent dragon, but simply because she has a childlike longing to witness something spectacular.

"Since the beginning of the Western calendar, that dragon has been hidden beneath the earth. It will soon be 500 years since he fell asleep. It has now turned to stone and will soon be absorbed by the soil. The dragon's soul, however, has long since migrated to the reverse side of the world. It's only a matter of the soulless body dissolving into oil or ore after death."

————— ***"So that's how it is. I'm glad you are Merlin, you're so knowledgeable."***

"Of course I am. Artoria, I'm your teacher in magic and mystery. There are as many things as mountains that I want to tell you."

"However, now is the time to be a king."

"The Saxons are about to cross the sea once more. They may grow in number, but they will never decrease. Keeping an eye on what you're doing is a good idea. With the supplies they have, they can last a month. Who exactly is holding the south now?"

————— ***"It is Sir Tristan and Sir Bedivere. With the current supplies, they should be able to last a month."***

"Oh, and if you have Bedivere, Tristan will put forth some serious effort. It's an excellent combo."

————— ***"Merlin, please correct your speech. Sir Tristan has always been a serious individual. It's just that his sensibility is so poetic compared to people that he always seems desperate when it comes to comforting the opposite sex. You and Kay are the only ones who are disloyal."***

"What the hell ! In your mind, I'm as hollow as Kay, even though I'm a teacher!? Artoria, you appear to have misunderstood me. It is true that I have many loves, but all of them are pledges of eternal love. Like Sir Tristan, I'm not pessimistic, and it's not something I'll forget the next day like Kay. It's about a happy affair between a man and a woman who love each other."

————— ***"Is that so? But it is Agravain's opinion. He may not speak much, but he is a better judge of character than anyone else."***

"It's getting more and more shocking to me! I didn't expect you would trust that gloomy, ghostly man! No, well, he does have a good eye, and he's always nervous about it."

He's like an incarnation of a secretary who has no interest in authority!"

"The best thing about the Knights at the Round Table is that they're all strange and never boring!"

In Camelot, there is a relic called the Round Table. It is a circular, round table in a literal sense. Knights who sit on it swear to be equal companions, regardless of their rank or status. It was recreated for Camelot from the original proof of heroes as the declaration of their bond.

The Round Table serves as both a foundation for Camelot and a symbol for the world today.

If King Arthur's holy sword is the energy that sustains the castle, then the Round Table is like pillars that hold it in place. There are enough seats for thirteen people, and King Arthur was also one of those who also sat at the round table.

There were still many empty seats at the moment, but there will be twelve knights soon. The reason for twelve rather than thirteen is that one of the seats at the round table is known as the most dangerous seat.

Because it is the unlucky thirteenth, no one wants to sit there. As a result, everyone assumed that the Round Table would have twelve knights. No one expected a natural...no, a gutsy individual to show up for the position at the moment.

The Tristan she had just mentioned was the son of King Rivalen, a gorgeous knight who had become a wandering knight for one reason or another. He's also known as the "Child of Sorrow".

It is rumored that even the fairies worry about their appearance in front of him and hide in the bushes to keep up appearances. It's

just a shame that's the truth. If it were women, his alluring gaze would pierce their hearts faster than an arrow could penetrate them.

Tristan is the Round Table's best bow user, but one would hesitate to call it a "bow."

"That's not true, you fundamentally misunderstood what a bow is!" will most likely be the response from masters of the bow from all across the world, and they would protest.

Agravain is a blood relative of King Arthur — the son of Morgan, King Arthur's actual sister, who inherited Uther's blood, and it is by this little edge that he became a Knight of the Round Table. He is a cold-hearted knight who never expresses his emotion or becomes offended, but King Arthur appreciates and trusts him because he treats everything equally.

The other knights of the Round Table are annoyed with him because he sends his soldiers to their deaths without batting an eye, but no one can seriously object to him because his private life was not impure in the slightest.

Agravain rarely stands on the front lines, but when he does, he makes sure to get out unscathed, no matter how powerful his opponents are, earning him the moniker "Agravain who knew no wounds."

These knights of the round table were worthy of being called heroes.

However, not all of them were as powerful as one another, and none of them were as powerful as King Arthur.

It was not always a matter of being strong in life, but of being strong in spirit.

The vile king has been overthrown and the barbaric behaviors of the foreign invaders were barely restrained. But the future of Britain remains bleak, the daily life of the population was not changing, causing the flourishing of evil .

That's correct. Even after defeating the man who caused the Dark Ages, the fact that the future did not become brighter as a result caused 'malice' to grow in people's hearts.

"Wasn't King Arthur the king who was supposed to shine?"

"Wouldn't the country be prosperous if we obeyed him??"

————— ***"..... I have no choice but to take the blame.***

This year's crop is bad once again, and the forest's bounty is diminishing. We can no longer share the forest with other people. We are left with no option but to buy crops from other countries.....I am going to be in need of Sir Lancelot's help once again.."

"That's not the problem. This island is poor, to begin with. The people of Britain are falling into darkness because the Shinning Tower can no longer be seen."

-"The Shinning Tower? You mean Rhongomyniad, the Holy Lance?"

"Yeah. Speaking of which, I still haven't explained the difference between the Holy Sword and the Holy Lance.

The Holy Sword was born within the planet -- a divine weapon inside the star and forged by the hands of the star, so to speak. It is not a weapon to protect humans, but a sword to protect the world. It was created by this planet in anticipation of a foreign enemy that would destroy the planet. A sword that protects the planet, not a weapon to protect humans. Of course, you can use it against foreign races, but it was originally meant to defeat 'Destruction'. That's why--"

————— ***"Its true power cannot be used outside of a battle to save the world, you say? I don't need to be warned by you. Sword of selection Caliburn aside, the Golden Sword, Excalibur is simply far too powerful. If you turn the earth into scorched together with the foreigners, you're putting the cart before the horse. You mistake my priorities to think that I would use it to scorch lands for some barbarians."***

"Exactly, that's how it is."

"The starlight is meant to be used at the right moment."

"Remember this, there might come a day when you must fight not as a king, but as a lone hero."

"If you wield the holy sword without thinking too much,

you'll surely get a reaction that will bite back you."

"Your body is sturdy enough, so probably will remain unharmed, but the people around you will be in for a rough ride for sure."

————— ***"Merlin, I will accept the facts as they are with an open mind because you speak the truth, but please don't make arguments that treat people like they're made of steel or something. ."***

"My apologies for being rude. Next, we'll discuss the Holy Lance. This one is not for defeating foreign enemies, but for stabilizing the planet. Rather it's more of an anchor for the planet. Earlier, you mentioned fairyland. But fairyland is not in a different world. It's beneath your feet -- in the reverse side of the world, separated by a thin layer of skin"

————— ***"Beneath my feet... is it under the ground?"***

"It's okay to think that way. Simply put, beneath what you call "your world", there exists a gap called fairyland, and the earth's surface is below that. Both your world and fairyland are nothing more than layers of skins. Textures. Each of them is like a piece of skin, a texture, a cover attached to the earth's surface."

————— ***"Textures... This Britain, you mean?"***

“Not just Britain, but your entire human world. I'd say Britain is a tad more special.”

“Artoria. What you see in front of you is not all there is. At the time when you humans took up the seat of the primate, the Fairies sensed and already understood that the way of existence on this planet would change, and accepted it. Planets change their physical laws depending on the life that is active on their surface. What was once a time of mystery and magic is slowly dying out as you humans become the greatest power in the world. The gods of nature that possessed personalities became mere natural phenomena, and the Ether in the atmosphere dispersed. After the death of the king of magecraft, Solomon, the decline of the mysteries accelerated. Finally, five hundred years ago, the Age of Gods finally, completely, came to an end.

This planet became something that belonged to animals that freed themselves from nature, and could somehow keep living on their own, even when detached from the cycle of nature. Yes, to make it clear, I mean you humans.

The direction of intelligence that humans have acquired: -- their mentality -- a desire to illuminate the darkness of “uncertain laws”. As a result, the rules of the planet became "the most suitable laws for human survival".

“Whether it is a dragon or a fairy, it is considered foul in your human rules. That's why they migrated themselves to the reverse side of the world, leaving the surface ground

for you humans. And the only ones who remained were those who didn't have the strength to migrate and those who couldn't accept their own end.

The formers are harmless, but the latter pose grave threats to humans. Relatively more powerful individuals could survive the loss of atmospheric magic, and will probably continue to live for hundreds of years threatening the human race."

" In short, you have become the representatives of the planet, but you guys can be rolled up like a thin layer of cloth. What do you do when you have a piece of cloth that's about to blow away in the wind? Leave it alone? Of course not. If it's going to be peeled off, you stitch it in a place so that can't happen. Like that this texture of the world where you humans live is anchored to this planet by the Holy Lance. The Lance that shines to the Ends of the World. The pillar that guards the primates. "

"Rhongomyniad."

————— ***"But why, why are you giving me such an incredible thing!?"***

"Because you're the king of Britain. Listen, this island is very special. The continent has long been a part of the human world. After all, countries are connected by land. So, the laws of physics are being rewritten relatively quickly there. But this island is different. The air and

mysteries of the Age of Gods still remain. This is the characteristic of small island countries. The more isolated you are from the mainland, the easier it is for the land to retain its mysteries. Britannia in particular is important. It's like the navel of the planet. It is a sacred place that is equal to the heart of those who live in mystery.

So, if... let me think. If someone wants to fill the planet with ether once more, he'd undoubtedly build his workshop here on this island. This place is the last remnant of the Age of Gods, so it can also serve as a pivot for subverting the world's order. The Holy Lance is “stabbing into the world” in order to prevent that from happening. If you want to protect Britain, you have to seal the magical world.”

Being disappointed, she felt exhausted to the bone. Looking down at her hands which had thoughtlessly accepted the lance, Artoria gulped as if she swallowed water.

———"But, Merlin. I have the lance. Does that mean it's not anchoring the world?"

“No, the Tower of the End is in place. It's invisible to human eyes because you're holding it. The brilliant, shining tower beyond the horizon is in your hands It's like, suddenly you're a God.”

—————"No way! I'll give it back to you right now. Oh no! I can't leave it to Merlin! If I trust it to you, you'd definitely stick it in some random rock to confuse people for the fun of it !"

"Hahahaha, you know me so well. Then make sure you keep it with you. Well, the holy spear you were forced to carry by Vivian is a shadow of its former self, the tower. Those who try to abuse its power, for example, Vortigern ...just don't give it to a guy like that."

As soon as she heard Vortigern's name, a shadow fell over her lively face. The conversation that had been going so well till now ended because of the carelessness of the magus.

"Yes", she nodded quietly.

"Britain will be destroyed. But do not mourn."

"You will not see the end of Britain, but will die by the hand of Britain."

The vile King left behind those words when he was being burned up. It is fortunate that she and Sir Gawain, who fought by her side, were the only ones who were able to hear his last words.

"Oh, dear. Well, that's to be expected, I suppose. Everyone thought that defeating the vile king would bring peace and prosperity to Britain."

"But it didn't work out that way. Even if the vile king is gone, the war is not over."

It was a bad habit of the magus. There was no need to cloud her mind here, but suddenly he grew curious to see what color her face of anguish would be.

“The bad harvest has continued this year and will still continue next year. The people are happy that there is less fighting, but there are those who are not satisfied with that. ‘What was the point of dying to drive back the foreigners?’ Of course, it's to make a luxurious life for themselves.”

“Some of the knights even ran off criticizing you for your selfishness.”

“Humans like the truth even though they hate things that are too truthful. As long King Arthur remains each man's ideal, they'll wholly entrust him with the hope that all will be well at the end, at the same time they'll also degrade King Arthur for all that goes wrong for them and begin to alienate him.”

“You must bear everything, or even trample on them above that. You will be given only injustice and never be understood. However, But the more of them there are, the more stable the people's lives will be. The dominant side and the subordinate side. Human beings are creatures where only one of them can get happiness.”

The magus says that with a wicked smile on his face. That's what it means to be king and what King really is. The dignity of the king depicted in people's minds is different from the dignity that the king actually embraces. The more he thinks about the lives of the people, the more unhappy the king's human heart becomes.

“So the more I suffer, the more the

country will prosper. Is that what you're trying to say?"

"Yes. You knew about this, didn't you? You knew about this and still pulled the sword of selection after that."

"So, the sooner you get rid of the human heart, the sooner you can become a transcendent being like Uther. Then at least your heart won't suffer."

"In other words, that is also the ideal form of being a king."

"King Arthur maintains the same governance as he has today, but her heart will not suffer anymore."

To be honest, the magus was actually dead serious about tempting her that way.

The reason is that maybe it would be more fun that way.

Or perhaps, compared to herself, the magus has long been unable to see the sight of her.

But she neither fell for the grand plan of the magus nor gave him a response he had expected.

With a bouncy smile, she said:

—————"Yes. I'm proud to say I'm doing well in that regard. Please watch my back, Merlin. I can't say it will be soon, but I will make this island a good place to

live on. I am sure it will not lose to the legendary utopia, Avalon. Ahem”

She laughed. As if feeling happy from the bottom of her heart, she puffs up her chest proudly.

It was at this moment that the magus realized his mistake.

For her, what was important was not how to exist as a king.

She just picked up the sword for people's lives.

From the very beginning, the king's dignity had never been considered at all.

The sins of the late King Uther and the magus.

He realized what they were after was too different from what she was after.

And, the magus knew at the same time that he had really underestimated her.

“Anyway, as long as she continues to rule, the girl will despair.

As long as I stop her at that time---”

He told himself.

The magician being ashamed of his ugly self who had that arrogant thought, wondered whether it would be possible for him to change the road ahead, even from now on.

But it was already too late.

"Avalon, you dare to say that word? Even I haven't been to Avalon."

Pretending to laugh, the magus looked away from her with a bitter smile.



"I cannot clearly describe the sense of loss I felt at that moment."

"In the long years of pursuing the glory that I thought I would never get in my life, I had already been granted that, but unknowingly I destroyed it with my own hands."

"On the day of the selection, did the magus really have the qualifications to question the girl?"

"I am the most foolish magus in the world."

"This girl is full of the qualities of a king."

"Such a mistake, yet I shamelessly believed that it was right."

GARDEN OF AVALON

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Chapter02 Interlude

STORY OF KNIGHTS

騎士たちの話

Sir Gawain

I have never doubted the power of the king.

He is impeccable in mind, body, and spirit, and he has never made a single mistake in his choices or decisions as king.

My lord is the embodiment of the ideal knight.

People misunderstood, that king does not bear the title King of Knights because he is a king and a knight.

He was called King of Knights because all the knights of Britain admired him as worthy of their respect and obedience.

Lord Merlin often says that there is no hierarchy at the Round Table, but the truth is we have all gathered to honor the King as our brother and to be his hands.

Without the King, there can be no unity in the Round Table.

If being undefeated in battles is the condition for a king, then my king is truly an undefeated God of War.

It is only because of the King's splendor that we have been able to end many battles with a victory at disadvantage with inferior strength.

Every time I chased after his lead, I was convinced Britain would one day have a bright future.

..... But only once. Just once there was a battle where I feared for the king's victory and only could watch his back. Vortigern the Usurper, the vile king who tried to take over Britain by bringing in different races, was a demon of a king that even we Knights of the Round Table could not have imagined.

After vanquishing the foreign tribes that had taken over the city, the king and we attacked the throne room where the Vile King was waiting.

Only Vile King was alone left on the enemy side.

On the other hand, our troop had the unharmed King and the elite soldiers.

“There is no need to fight any longer”, all the soldiers thought so - foolishly, taking it lightly even I was caught off guard.

If the King's sword is the light of the star (planet),
my sword is the sun's image, a mallet to burn away evil.
On the battlefield where the king and I can fight together, who
can imagine defeat?

..... Yet. The only one who saw through the Vile King's ability
was King Arthur, who was also a King. “Why do you resist?”

“Why not admit it? “

“Why do you try to be human?”

***“Britain must perish. You must die out. If the island is
to be defiled by the hands of men, I will return it to
primeval times.”***

***“_____To hell with Great Britain. I shall turn it a
dark paradise where no human can ever live.”***

In front of the decaying throne, there was a figure of black

shadow. Its armor was dyed black and shadows covered it even though it was noon.

..... It was.....a hole opened in the world itself.

Something inhuman that I knew, with dread, swallowed boiling molten iron into its belly.

The demon dragon Vortigern.

That was the true nature of the creature that was trying to bring ruin in Britain.

“~~—————~~**Wha--**”

Our hesitation led to death.

With a single blow from the Vile King, the soldiers were vaporized and I lost the strength to fight.

That thing devours the holy sword. The more sacred the opponent is, the thicker the darkness grew.

My holy sword Galatine was robbed of its brilliance. The glow of King's Holy Sword, Excalibur too was reduced into a faintly lit bonfire.

In the midst of all that

—————***“You did well Knight of the Sun, mighty***

Gawain. See. It appears that guy's stomach can't fully swallow your light."

The King smiled at me and said that the Vile King could not drink the light of Excalibur because he had swallowed the light of Galatine, and the King alone raced to fight that demon dragon.

No, what happened was the opposite. The only reason I survived was as a result of the king defending me on the spur of the moment.

The light of the king's holy sword was being reduced because of my mistake.

The light would soon fade. Amid a raging storm, there was no way a tiny light like that can keep shining through.

We were relying only on the dazzling light.

So, when it was lost, all we could think about was praying amidst the darkness.

But - that was my limit, and such a predicament was the daily life for the king.

The King's light was always faint.

But it never faded and kept on shining like a lighthouse even in a raging storm.

The battle lasted several hours.

The throne collapsed.

The demon dragon grew huge, calling up dark clouds with its roar it destroyed the citadel.

The dragon's head manifested itself, engulfing the weapons of the soldiers, dead flesh, and the rubble of the citadel.

The King must have realized all along, didn't he?

Vortigern is Britain itself. It was Vile King who had appeared as the will and avatar (alter ego) of the island.

The King of a small tribe who drank the blood of a dragon had lost his humanity long ago.

No matter how enormous King's magical power might have been and even if his holy sword can burn the land....his enemy is the entire island of Britain as his body.

It would have been apparent to anyone's eyes that there's no chance of winning. It was like an ant challenging a human.

Once I recovered, I suggested the King retreat while I guarded his back. And the king was as calm as ever, embracing the fear, looked up into the sky.

"I will require your assistance a little more, Sir Gawain. You and I are here together. What are wielders of holy swords if they cannot quiet tantrum of one or two fits of the island?"

His faint cool smile was directed at himself, also towards me. I felt my fighting spirit, which was about to wither, fill my body,

and together with the King we faced the demon dragon once again.

Our holy swords dug into the hands of the demon dragon, slightly depriving him of his freedom.

The victory was in sight but we no longer had any weapons. If we drew our holy swords, the demon dragon would soar into the sky again.

It was at that moment when the King wielded that shining spear.

A spiral of light pierced the heart of the crucified demon dragon, and it collapsed with a deafening roar.

The miracle I had witnessed robbed me of the ability to act,

and I could only gaze at the King with admiration for what I could not do.

...How How much time has passed?

Rain dropped from the dark clouds, engulfing the city with the noise of rainfall.

In front of the king was only the figure of a man with a spear through his chest, on the verge of death.

Vortigern.

The shadow that covered him disappeared.

The rampage that had been pouring out of him was nowhere to be seen. All that was left was a pathetic old man with anguish etched into his body.

“I didn't think that even Rhongomyniad had been given.”

“You bunch of fools.... To avenge the tyrant, you would call forth even greater destruction. Child of my brother Uther. You cannot save this kingdom. You cannot win against mankind. Because----”

The old man's voice echoed loudly, unmistakable without being interrupted by the sound of the rain.

The king took one step closer to the old man, and then another.

“Because, aghhh, the age of mystery has long since ended.”

“The coming age is the age of civilization, the age of man.”

“The power at the bottom of your heart cannot coexist with human beings.”

“As long as you are still alive in Britain, there is no future.”

“Curse your fate. The old Britain is long gone.”

The king drew his spear from the old man with his head bowed.

A burst of laughter. Laughing wildly like a whirlwind. A laugh that shook the fortress city and returned to the dust.

Where did the strength remain in that old man?

The Vile King died that way, and my King raised his sacred sword and declared victory.

The rain ceased, and the sun's blessing returned through the gaps of the black clouds. The figure of the king, who announced the end of the battle, was even more radiant than usual.

Anyone who witnessed it admired the king's power and felt confident that the future held the promise of prosperity.

Of course, I was one of them. I did not understand what their conversation indicated, but I could rejoice in the king's victory.

I dragged my exhausted body and looked back at the King.

His body was even more exhausted than mine but showing no sign of weakness, the king returned triumphantly.

I told him with great enthusiasm,

“The only thing left to do is to fight against remaining foreigners”.

That battle was so divine. The country was still in shambles, but as long as we have King Arthur, we have nothing to fear.

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Chapter 03

The Declining Sun

斜陽

With the death of Vortigern, the civil strife in Britain came to a temporary end for the time being.

Castle of Camelot was completed, vacant seats on the round table were filled, and the king welcomed Guinevere as the queen.

The king confessed to Guinevere that she had been lying about her gender and disguised it from the public, and Guinevere accepted that secret, thinking that it was for the sake of ruling Britain, to be its governor.

No, it's better to say she had to accept it. Guinevere was smart, intelligent, and a wise woman.

She knew how hard King Arthur had worked to bring the civil war to an end, how much effort 'he' had to put to resolve the unrest and at the same time she deeply adored 'him' from the bottom of her heart.

In truth, she had admired King Arthur in the shadows for **ten** years, ever since the King drew the sword of selection and slain the Vile King.

The magus couldn't fathom how the queen felt when she learned the truth on the night that her ten years of feelings came to an end. It was as though the instant she received what she wanted, she was told it was all an illusion like a dream and she'd never get it.

Was that betrayal and despair, or sympathy for the king's sufferings? Perhaps it was a combination of both.

Despite knowing the truth, Queen Guinevere acted as a proper queen and supported the king well.

For her, the marriage, that was so celebrated by everyone, was like to a bird in a cage.

The King always had that in mind, often being worried showed concern but the queen would just say :

“ What are you talking about Artoria? It’s not like you can be rewarded as a woman either, right ?”

She had no choice but to force herself to accept the advantage given through queen's goodwill, who had worked so hard to make that smile.

Although the king and queen's relationship was temporary and fake, the friendship that had developed between them was genuine and real.

This trusting friend-like relationship made them seem like a happy amicable couple in the eyes of other people.

The queen's arrival breathed new life into Camelot.

Sir Lancelot’s arrival had been eagerly anticipated for a long time. He finally joins the Round Table.

Agravain had been hesitant to join until the very end, but his influence as a foreign lord(Franch) was significant.

Because he worked as a mediator, trade with the continent became several times smoother.

It was during this period when the legend of the Round Table blossomed.

As the war with the foreign peoples subsided, the knights of the

Round Table appeared in all domestic disputes and settled them across the country.

They saw one other as rivals and would cross swords to put each other to the test if they find slightest excuse, yet they were all excellent individuals who were worthy of recognition.

The magus also grew busy with the knights, taking parts in many adventures, with many risks.

Although this has led him to have many problems concerning females and he had to earnestly listen to the king's lecture every time, I will keep those details a secret.

The "Camelot of Flowers", as it will be called in the future.

In fact, no matter how devastated or deserted Britain was, Camelot was always full of smiles and hope.

People believed it was because of the glory and majesty of King Arthur. The knights boasted with pride believing it was the fruit of their hard work. And, the king was the only one in her distress, anguished after looking at reality.
No flower can bloom forever.

Even with Camelot's prestige alive and well, Britain was still in decline

The magus informed the king that the mysteries that remained in the land were nothing more than a residue.

————— ***"So... you're saying that the land is not falling apart because of foreign invasion?"***

"Unfortunately, yes. It is a foreign country, far from the mainland where the mysteries of the planet are fading away since the beginning of the western calendar, and yet it still retains the air of the Age of God. The reason why the Picts, dragons, and succubus still exist here. And lastly, the people of Britain are also included in this category.

The foreigners are not the only invaders. The land itself is being changed. The bad harvest will continue until your extinction. In the past, the only area that had a good harvest was around Camelot. But even that's going to fade away soon."

———".....*You want us to find a new way to survive? To plant imported seeds, to accept foreign blood, to change the way this island exists?*"

"I am just saying that is one method from two options. After all, it's not up to you to decide which one you want or choose. And I'm going to be mean, but it doesn't make much difference what you choose. Whether you choose to fight to the end or accept a different race, the end result will be the same."

A dark cloud filled with bitterness casts a shadow on the King's face for a moment, engulfing it with anguish, but she immediately regained her usual awe-inspiring dignified expression.

—————"Whatever it is, this will take time either way. Whether we maintain it or change it, we must do

so only after we have prevented the invasion of foreign nations. They are only interested in looting."

"O King Arthur, you really think you have a chance of victory? What are the odds that the land you so hoped for would be restored only after the foreigners are driven back?"

——— "....Of course. There will be no replenishment of the supplies, as of now. Then we'll just have to fight with what we have in reserve."

The king's decision was made at the same time as the foreigners started invading again.

Even if the foreigners lost Vortigern, they would keep attacking. Vortigern was nothing but a monster, but these foreigners were human beings.

Foreign opponents that invaded for human reasons and attacked with human persistence and obsession were significantly more difficult for the Britons to deal with as an enemy than Vortigern.

In terms of strength, the Britons were superior.

However, the difference in the standard of victory between those who had to defend their lands, their families, their properties and those who attacked with nothing at all, to begin with, was far too great.

"The barbarians would only take the farmland. They take what they can, kill rest, and walk away. They would keep repeating this forever. The way they fight is too different

from ours, where we have to protect our land, our homes, and our fields.”

“No, it'd have been better if that's all they wanted to do. It'd have been better if it's just taking. They want to live here permanently. They want to take this land that we have spent so many years nurturing, and they want to take it for themselves without any effort!”

If there is abundant land, it is a habit of animals to gather there.

In the end, the principle behind the action of the different races was “to survive”.

The foreigners too were looking for new lands to survive. But now Britain had no capacity to accept immigrants, and the foreigners also had no capacity to spend years tilling and cultivating the wasteland.

Both the Britons and the Saxons knew that they would die out in a year if they did not have land to grow crops.

Coexistence is not possible.

This was a war that should've continued until one of the sides completely dies out.

In addition, the enemy was not only a foreign race this time.

A part of the Empire also joined the invasion.

They invaded Britain, which was exhausted from fighting the foreigners, and intended to bring Britain under their rule again.

————— ***“Get your saddles ready, we shall annihilate all foreign enemies who dare to set foot on Britain!”***

Though the situation was not good, it was still far from being ruined.

She went to the battlefield herself.

The final stage of the twelve battles that King Arthur has fought.

This is how the journey to the Hill of Destiny began

There was never a day without a war council.

Not a single night without camping.

The fact that the King always stood up as a vanguard was probably a sign of her determination.

In order to join the battle, she had to cut off many of her people.

As soon as she joined the battles, she had to cut down all of her enemies .

It was a common practice to sack small villages to prepare armaments and rations in order to build up an army for the battle to defend the island.

There were many Knights who were against letting the villages dry up. It was an extra sacrifice for the knights and a dishonorable thing to do.

There were no knights who would accept to do it, even knowing if

they did not do so, there would be way more casualties.

“In what world would a king burn down his own homeland while using barbarians as his opponents? ”

It was already decided where the villagers were going to settle, but there was no way to heal the hearts of the people whose homelands were being taken away. Many of the soldiers were from such villages.

—————***"These are the measures to win tomorrow. I hope all of you can endure with me."***

In this sense, there was probably no knight who has killed so many people as she has and was hated by so many humans.

The figure of this human running over the battlefields, however, was not confused nor had any doubts

Even when she puts herself on the throne, she does not slightly narrow her eyes in grief.

It was all too obvious to her.

The magus was showing her this scene on the day of the selection.

The king is not a person.

If you have human heart, you cannot protect people.
She has kept that vow strictly to this day.

She solved all kinds of problems, and worked so hard on her

political affairs that everyone was amazed to the degree , they became speechless.

She balanced the country without a single deviation, and punished criminals without the slightest error.

Even in the midst of battles with different peoples of different races, she targeted, captured ,and then punished lords who were the roots of civil wars.

Her way of doing things must have seemed more ruthless and cold-hearted in the eyes of the soldiers than the previous king, Uther.

No, even more than that Vortigern.

After not knowing how many battles ended in victory under her command, without any disorder or chaos, the scattered tribes were united together and led by her.

"The king understands not of human heart-----"

One of the Knights of the Round Table left King Arthur's side after muttering that.

Was it because many held that kind of uneasiness, no one blamed that knight?

In this terrible situation where everyone was in a state of being defeated, falling to the ground, the more perfect she became as a king, the more they questioned their own ruler.

"How could someone who has no human feelings rules over people?"

Some of the more famous knights returned to their territories.

The king accepted this as a natural outcome and made it a part of the process of government.

After all, there was no room for extra punishment.

And even if they just hide in their own territory, there is a use for that. When fighting the foreigners, they could be used as bait depending on how the fight goes.

That judgment left the knights even more scared.

"That king only uses us as chess pieces."

"That's right. The king who can handle everything by himself cannot possibly think of us as the same human being like him"

The King of Knights, who was once so admired and beautiful in the eyes of the knights, whom they saw as their pride, thus become isolated.

But that was a trivial matter of concern that had nothing to do with the King.

Even if she is separated, feared, and betrayed, her heart will not change.

The struggle with the foreigners became more and more intense, and finally, the decisive battle was about to begin.

The hunted-down enemies, being driven to the brink of extinction, gathered at Badon Hill and launched their final attack.

The knights were swallowed up by the numbers and momentum

of the foreigners, engulfing them in their fear that they would lose this battle.

However, that was just the knights' worry.

The battle ended in victory for King Arthur.

With the overwhelming result of destroying 40% of the enemy army, the foreigners surrendered and swore not to enter the land of Britain as long as the king was there.

--- This was the obvious outcome.

A year since she left Camelot.

It was to win "this" victory that she planned and used all her military tactics, and made all of her decisions.

The king was standing on a hill.

In the distance, the voices of soldiers shouting and cheering in victory rang out.

"Congratulations, King Arthur!"

"I admire you all over again. In a good way, you've exceeded my expectations."

—————***"Please say that to everyone, Merlin. This is not just my victory."***

As she stood by the holy sword on the ground, she replied, looking at the brightness of the joyous crowd in front of her.

It was definitely the aftermath of a massive victory, but her eyes were devoid of joy.

The country, which had only been waiting for destruction until now, thus given a moment of peace.

The war of relying on an absolute hero ended in this way.

Britain was finally becoming the peaceful country she had dreamed of when she first drew her sword.

To recount the events that followed after that really tires one.

She told a secretary, one that she could supposedly trust, the secret of the island and attempted to resolve them.

The secretary advised that if the island were to lose its mystery, it should gain a comparable miracle, and the king accepted the proposal.

Thus began the search for the Holy Grail of the Round Table, which remained in later anecdotes(legends).

Many knights went on a quest to find the chalice and returned half-heartedly.

Percival, who loved King Arthur more than anyone else, lost his life.

Galahad, who was hailed as the perfect knight and the boy who would carry the Round Table for the next generation, obtained the Holy Grail, but his selflessness caused it to be returned to heaven, and he himself ascended to heaven.

Camelot was filled with grief, but it was still honorable grief.

King Arthur was in his tenth and final year on the throne of Camelot.

Lancelot and Guinevere's illicit relationship was uncovered.



"Let's talk about something happy. What is chivalry to you, Artoria?"

—————***"What do you say out of blue?"***

"To protect one's morals. To protect the people with one's body as a shield. To keep one's lord alive. On a battlefield not to show fear, not to swing the sword out of one's desire or greed, but to wield it in defense of one's country and one's beliefs - that's what Ector taught me. Isn't that right?"

She looked straight into the magus.

Even at this stage of her life, she was still open to what others had to say, accepting their suggestions, still thinking about them, still educating herself to see if there were any flaws in her own mind, not neglecting self-development to see if there is anything her heart lacks.

Ector was a little too good as a teacher.

"Even the Knight's chivalry has its own differences. He who returns courtesy with courtesy. A man who punishes evil above all else. A man who is proud to protect his

territory. I think it's the person's pride and beliefs. No, I don't have any attachment to that, so I don't really feel it, but I can understand it.

So is the same for him. Living in love with the queen was the most important thing he could do as a human being.”

She stared at the magus with eyes that had never been seen before and burst into laughter as if she couldn't bear it anymore.

It was an expression the magus hadn't seen since her training days, and it was appropriate for her age.

————— ***“I didn't expect you to be concerned about me, but I must've seemed rather depressed to make you worry.”***

————— ***“But don't worry. I do not blame Sir Lancelot nor do I hate him. It's better to say I'm sorry for them. Because of my distorted way of being, it robbed away the happiness of those two people.”***

There was sadness and compassion on the lonely side of her face.

She was mourning. The knights of the round table have also deceased.

Agravain , Gareth, Gaheris, people who will never come back. Gawain was wounded after fighting Lancelot alone, trapped by his own personal grudge against the unchaste.

Lancelot, who's the key to these, left Britain and is now in his own territory on the other side of the sea.

————— ***"The letter to Sir Lancelot will be discussed later. For now, we must deal with the problem of Rome. We must take our consideration and slam our thoughts upon those who have misbehaved then driven the Saxons out and now hunting them without any discipline. Of course, we have to double the points on the sword so far."***

It's really hard to see that smile.

But at the same time, the magus also thought that he wanted to keep watching that smile.

That didn't seem like feelings the irresponsible son of an incubus can have.

The magus felt embarrassed, to hide his shyness he says,

"Arthur. Even if you can do everything correctly, give it your all, there are certain things that come to an end. Nothing lasts forever. Everything will eventually change into something new. So, it's not the future that should be protected."

————— ***"Oh my! Now what? You are really chatty than ever today."***

“I’m all fine. What matters is the process of saving what you lived for. The outcome will always be overwritten by a new result. The next king will destroy a king's righteousness to fit his own interests. Nothing will remain. Nothing is going to be left behind.”

“Even so, if your life is not tarnished to the end, if you are proud of it, if you believe you have a life worth boasting about, if it is loved by all, then it will be a record, a shining star that will last forever so long as human history continues to be.”

“From the perspective of the history of the earth, it seems insignificant, whether it is the naive hope of a young girl or a humble decision. But for those who live in the future, there will be a day when they will look like dazzling treasures, anecdotes.”

—————***“Umm. Merlin? What am I? I don't need glory or honor or anything like that anymore. I've had more than enough.”***

“No way! What people put on you is not honor, and it's no glory either. It's more of a curse. You get nothing of it at all.”

“It is just a ‘hope’ that something like that will continue to exert the goodness of mankind. What you leave behind is the precious illusion, fantasy. Or you can call it romance too.”

_____“.....***Sorry, I really don't understand much about it...***”

"So. Even if that ideal cannot be realized when you are there. As long as you can keep the vow you made at once, there will always be someone who will be saved by it."

That gentle smile had been replaced by a look of seeing something unthinkable.

It is really a great shame.

For a magus who can only say things that nitpick on the wrongs and perfunctory things, he said her something quite close to the essence of truth.

GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter03 Interlude

STORY OF KNIGHTS
騎士たちの話

Sir Lancelot

When we returned to my domain's castle and arrived in my chamber, sleep overtook the Queen.

No surprise.

She had been accused of adultery, brought to a lonely castle, and finally freed from the stone cell where she'd been imprisoned only to await her execution.

Arriving at a safe haven relieved the tension built up in her heart and the queen eventually sank deep into unconsciousness.

The stains of tears etched a trace of remorse on her cheek.

The queen's sorrow was not from the fact that she had been chased away from Camelot nor was it that I had stolen her.

It was that she had betrayed King Arthur.

The marks left on her face were from her constantly apologizing to the king, thinking of how much she must be suffering because of our relationship.

My ragged fingers could not even wipe away the traces of her tears.

..... The other knights could not possibly know how much the queen admired the king and supported her to this day.

She was called a traitor and unfaithful, suffered infamy of betrayal and infidelity, but her heart remained that of a fair maiden. Even now while having dreams, she must have continued apologizing to the king.

The relationship between the king and the queen was not a normal one. However, it was a relationship that they had accepted as inevitable, founded upon accepting what was out of their power.

Had there been no interloper such as I, the King and the Queen would have continued their lives with their secret preserved, there would have been no fighting between the Knights of the Round Table, and Camelot would have been restored to its former glory –

“...No, this was for the best. This was really for the best.”

I seated myself on the bed still in helm and armor. Knowing what circumstances the King was in, I at least owed it out of loyalty to remain in armor until the expedition Rome is over and the King returns to Britain.

This night will be a long one. Until the Queen awakes, I reflect on what the Queen told me of half the life of the King.

It is said that the king who is chosen to be the King of Britain was bestowed with a mysterious power. But the power was fading, and the previous king Uther was last to be endowed with such supernatural power.

King Uther feared that the next generation would no longer have the supernatural blessings of the British Isle, so he was driven to do something forbidden: he produced a child with his own blood and the blood of a dragon ,with human hands.

The magus Merlin accepted King Uther's suggestion, found the most suitable mother for a vessel to blend the two types of blood, and created the ideal king.

He did this for the sake of keeping Britain alive. There was no malice in the wish. As a king, it is the right thing to do when you rule a kingdom, to wish for leaving an even stronger successor.

The child ,born as an incarnation of the dragon, turned out to be exactly what the king and the magus had hoped for. However,

two problems appeared.

The first was that the child was a female.

The other was that Morgan, the daughter of King Uther, contrary to all expectations, was still a princess who retained the supernatural blood.

Despite being the same offspring of Britain, her younger sister was the one to have received the love and hopes of her father- Morgan hated her for it and became a witch queen who craved vengeance for all her life. Agravain too was an assassin sent by Morgan, and Mordred was – nay, I shall say no more.

Morgan is indeed a ruler with immense power, the daughter who has retained the supernatural power that was thought to have died out with Uther. She was the owner of the island Britain itself, and as the “Lord of the British isle” herself, she was a greater “Lord of the British Isle” than King Arthur.

But she still was but a small pebble in the path of the King. The witch queen could do nothing to injure the heart of the King, not even a scratch.

The problem was the gender of the child that was born. As a result, she was raised as a man. Because to rule over so many territories and knights she had to act like a man.

The ones that knew who she truly was, were only the previous King, Uther, her foster father Ector, and the magus. She literally covered herself in iron and sealed the truth for all her life.

The sword of selection was something I'd heard of.

In my own territory on the other side of the sea, I heard many gossips about the King of Britain.

A knight chosen by the magus Merlin.

The hero who pulled out the holy sword none could pull out.

In the midst of despair in Britain, there was only one light of hope that could defeat all the different races of foreign invaders.

As another knight, I couldn't help but be intrigued by him.

No, I will be honest.

I was young back then, filled with passion and conviction.

I spent my time pretending that I was not slightly interested in the King of Knights from Britain, increasingly conceitedly believing that this King of Knights in Britain was but rubbish, that I alone was the ideal knight.

However, when my own country began to compare me to this King of Knight, I finally had enough with this, I became angry and decided to measure this so-called legend with my own eyes.

Or perhaps it was by the Lord's guidance, I met the King as soon as I landed in Britain in the midst of battle.

The sight of a knight with a body that could only be described as a boy riding a horse and fearlessly swinging a sword in the midst of a horde of invaders.

A thoughtless person would probably insult the king's appearance and despise him for being unfit to be a knight.

I was one of them.

What is required in battle is weight, arm strength, and a tough body with stamina that can continue fighting day and night, or so I thought.

The young's physique would not even be able to deal with a

single barbarian.....

But I learned how wrong I was back then.

The essentials for being a knight is not just a strong body, but a spirit that vows what to train, what to protect with the sword. It was a matter of maintaining an unshakable conviction.

In that battle, I fought alongside the King and because of my accomplishments, I was granted the honor to speak with her as a friend and invited to Camelot as a guest.

Before long, I found myself desiring a seat on the Round Table. I have witnessed countless battles as a member of Knight of the Round Table. Just like other knights who were enthralled by their king and idolized that king, unable to see her secrets, and her agony, pains, sufferings.

It's not that there weren't people who had been suspicious of how the King appeared, of course.

But the king who held the holy sword would not be hurt, nor would she grow older.

They say the Holy sword has the blessings of the fairy- Lady of the Lake and the wielder is ageless, immortal.

Because of this, no one pursued to investigate the body of a knight who looked too petite, and even the face of what people thought was of a maiden, was praised by the knights as a demonstration of how handsome their king was.

In fact, the king was also invincible.

There was no room for his physique or facial appearance to interrupt that.

The people who were afraid of the invasion of the foreigners were seeking a powerful king.

The knights who rode on the battlefield would follow only a great leader.

And the king met all those qualifications.

So - in reality - no one was interested in who the king truly was.

The fact she could protect the kingdom as its ruler was enough.

The new King was fair and impartial, and she always stood at the vanguard on the field of battle slaying foe after foe.

Although countless enemies and many of her people died as a result, her decisions were always in the right, always making correct choices and she governed under these dire situations better than anyone else.

There is no room for doubt there, and in the end - who among the people being ruled really considers himself as the “same human” as the king?

“How dare you say that the King does not understand human hearts?”

“Sir Tristan, nay, all the knights of Britain are mistaken in their assumption.”

“Why had it not occurred to any of you that the King, just like the rest of you, was simply another person who made Britain a home?”

I was a knight from a foreign country. Born on different soil, and the climate and the culture I was raised in were different. An outsider so to speak.

Fundamentally, my thoughts and theirs do not intersect.

The Britons put their island and their country above everything else, but I am a person who puts people first, not the country.

I believe in the happiness of the individual over the happiness of the nation.

The French knight's creed was that if the woman he loved was in trouble, he would take her hand even if it meant giving up his country.

This made me feel uncomfortable, but thanks to it I was allowed to observe the Round Table calmly with a cool head

After Sir Tristan's departure, the king began to show signs of fatigue.

The Queen was worried about the King and I too was concerned about the weight being placed on the King causing him heartache.

I wanted to ease the king's burden as much as possible, even if only a little.

This became a common goal the queen and I shared.

We conversed with each other, acknowledged each other with respect, and came to rely on each other.

It was true that I was attracted to the queen at that point. I found her strength of mind and her willingness to support the king behind his back to be a rare blessing in disguise.

..... The queen's confession of the king's secret was probably because the burden within her had become too large for her to contain.

The true identity of the king was revealed to me, the queen's

loneliness became apparent to me, and I realized how immature I was.

It was anger that dominated me at that moment.

..... Anger at everything that was pure.

I felt an uncontrollable rage towards the island called Britain itself.

“As I suspected, didn’t I? You were never a worthy queen fit for King Arthur from the start, Guinevere.”

“You dare to say that? Agravain!”

The knight who had climbed up to the position of secretary knew the true identity of the king. Not only did he know who the king truly was, but he also used it to threaten the queen.

The queen’s humiliation forced me to make one final choice.

I cut my blade through many knights, took the lives of my friends called the Knights of the Round Table, and fled to my own domain.

My crime of unchastity was treachery, and I have become a traitor who has fallen so far becoming a foul beast that cannot even call itself a knight anymore.

The man deep inside of my soul cried out that “that’s all fine, this is what I wanted”.

I have taken the woman I love. King Arthur is a knight who lives up to his ideals. I used to be like that too. But we age. People age. We cannot be everlasting like the King. The time we humans have in order to live up to our ideals is just too short.

I am no longer the knight the king expected me to be. What I committed with the Queen unexpectedly proved that.

I even felt relief that the King would know of my disgrace, know of the limits of this man, and punish me for my disloyalty.

But the King said she would forgive us! The innocent and pure King said that she would forgive me, me and the Queen.

"My friend. My pride. O, my ideal knight.

If you had seen fit to commit such actions, they must have had sincere causes. I believe in you."

When I saw the letter of pardon having those inscriptions on it, I foresaw the end of my own soul burning down from madness.

"..... What is this?

Did the king not love Guinevere? No, I am certain she did love her. The king trusted the queen as her wife, as her best friend.

The king is giving forgiveness to someone who trampled on that trust and friendship ,and walked far away abandoning her?

Impossible! This is absolutely impossible!

She must have been trying to keep her face. Her responsibilities as king bound her to forgive me for my position as a knight. If I rebel, Camelot will really collapse. The King was surely casing her heart in iron and forgiving the traitor that I was all the while holding the utmost grudge—

"If only that were true. Had she been such a mundane person, then I wouldn't have run away at all."

.....Yes, the truth was I ran away because I was afraid. The King was sincerely giving her forgiveness. She was giving her blessings. To the Queen and myself. As if she was reassured that there could be no better conclusion, the right ending, of all things. She really was a king who only wished to protect her kingdom.

After all, she has been hiding her true nature and continuously killing herself for more than ten years just to do that, protecting her people.

..... If I were in the same position as the king, would I be able to forgive the traitor who wronged me in such a way?

No, such question in that premise is flawed to begin with. The king is different than us in the premise from the very start.

She was not a human, and she was never raised as a human. But still, she tried to live rightly as one.

A creature who could not experience the happiness of a person, yet one who loved the happiness of the people.

She is truly a monster. A monster that far surpasses Vortigern.

No wonder they couldn't understand her.

Is her way of existence not the hell that is portrayed in the minds of humans for their own convenience?

“ _____ ”

What was it that I had been so angered by?

Even now I respect and adore the King. But for a human being, I

cannot, I must not accept her way of being. To whitewash it as “too wonderful to be true” would make me no better than the knight who had left the castle.

“Guinevere, is this what has been tormenting you so much?”

The horror I felt now growing in my heart will one day become anger, then hate, and compel me to continue cursing the King who will continue to exist in ideals for all eternity. It was a horrid future but it was a fitting punishment for one like me.

The night is long.

The sun has yet to rise on the horizon.

I gaze at the island which had become a distant foreign land to me, at the once-glamorous chalk castle.

GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 04

The Voyage Out

船出

Somber dawn.

The sunrise from the harbor was seen somewhat shrouded by clouds, and the sky was still far from clear.

All the same, the sun rays on the horizon were reminiscent of golden ears of rice.

Her figure standing on the dock looked even more cheerful than ever.

The harbor was now in an up and down frenzy as a large fleet of ships were preparing to set sail.

She and the magus are having one final conversation on the dock, separated from the hustle and bustle of those people at the harbor.

“And so, finally, the expedition to Rome.”

“Are you going to change your mind or your policy will remain the same, King Arthur?”

————— ***“No change. We will confront them on their land before they come across the sea. First, a blow. Then we'll make them obey to negotiate.”***

The magus smiled at her confidence as she said without hesitation that “I would beat them first.”

He did not laugh out of mockery but from being delighted.

“Honestly, as always you hate to lose, don’t you?”

“But you’re right. Rome is underestimating Britain nowadays. They think we are exhausted from the war against the Saxons and they can secretly sneak in the picture. There’s nothing pleasurable like slapping a man like that in the face and making him fall on his back.”

—————“Yes. We also have years of complaints here, so of course, we won’t be merciful and will blow them far away. After that, while they still don’t know what to do, we’ll make them sign a peace treaty.”

“That sounds good”

The magus smiled, for he knew that “her”, or rather “King Arthur’s”, intentions would succeed. But----

“But your absence is a little worrying. Who are you going to leave this land with?”

—————“Big Brothe----No, Sir Kay, Mordred, and Sir Gawain, who is still recovering.

————— “Sir Lancelot’s situation will be explained to you all after this expedition.”

“-----Really? It turned out to be like this as I expected.”

The magus stopped halfway, hesitating to the end, he avoided telling her the real story.

It's true the magus did not have eyes that can read the future, but he did have eyes that see the world.

He had a clear idea of what is going to happen next. The cause and effect accumulated so far, due to the absence of the King's expedition, there is a high probability of a certain battle taking place.

The king would certainly win the battle in Rome.

However, after that, when he returns to Britain, the king will be surrounded by the army of her own country.

Mordred, the son of Morgan and the abomination who is also the copy of King Arthur.

This knight, whose true face is hidden by his helmet, will make his move as soon as King Arthur leaves.

He No, her rebellion is an inevitable fate.

But even then, so far so good, there is no problem to be seen yet.

No matter when Mordred rises up and rebels, King Arthur can smoothly suppress her and put her down without much trouble. But this is the only time when the promised victory is not in sight.

King Arthur, after the glorious feat of his Roman expedition, might die in the worst battle of her life: the murders of her own people, in which her countrymen would all kill each other.

"....."

The magus didn't tell her that fact.

Even though the magus had no humanity, the non-human was worried about the king in his own non-human way.

Britain has already reached its limits.

To save the country, the king's mission was over.

So, he thought it was time for her to finally rest.

The conversation between the king and the magus continued, though in fewer words.

After a few more questions, he said,

"This is a country that will be destroyed sooner or later."

"Even if we hold out for another hundred years, it will not have a significant impact on the history of this island. Or rather, let's say it has already fallen. So much for Britain, this is the end."

"..... What would you do if I started to say that?"

In the first person, which he had only used in his dreams, he declared the ruthless truth.

... "To what extent had she foreseen this outcome?" ...

She replied, as if she's talking to a decade-old friend,

————— ***"I'll be more furious at your everyday joke. Britain will not be destroyed. That's why I'm going to do what I can do."***

With a gentle smile, she said what she had to do.

————— ***"I'm determined to fight. Even if I lose everything. Even if I am hated by everyone."***

The magus suddenly remembered the events of the chosen day.
The dusk when everyone had left.

A young girl standing in front of the King's sword was determined.
This kind of thing, there is no need to ask such questions now.

「"Even so, I will fight, the King's oath." 」

In front of that rock, the wish of the maiden who was left behind there was engraved.

In exchange for her fate, the young girl prayed for the protection of everyone.

"Ah, that seems right. I've become forgetful recently. I cannot joke about humans."

"Yeah. It was only a short while ago, but it feels like an eternity. I didn't tell you much about Uther. He's as problematic a man as the Vile King Vortigern himself. Well, I too was just as much of a problem when I was amused and agreed to Uther's proposal for fun. But it seemed like a good choice at the time, and in fact, it was the best move I

could have made. We've created the ideal king. I think it worked too"

"But then things didn't go as expected."

"Our goal was to make an ideal king. Your goal was the happiness of people From the start, what we saw was different. That difference, if only I had noticed it earlier "

—————"Merlin?"

She looks at the magus curiously. Of course, it's only natural. Even though it's so obvious now, she doesn't understand what the magus was trying to say. She doesn't even know who is confessing to whom now.

It was very painful for the magus.

"It doesn't matter. That's all you have to do."

The departure bell rings.

The sun rises over the horizon, and the ship prepares to leave, never to return.

She makes her way to the ship's deck, but the sorcerer stays still.

"Sorry, I know it's all too sudden but I will stay here. I made a little mistake; I'm being watched by a vicious fairy with a bad temperament. For the time being, I will have to hide a bit."

She shrugged her shoulders and was taken aback by the magus word after a moment, with a slightly disgusted face and said,

————— ***"Really!?"***.

————— ***"I've told you so many times to avoid your troublesome relationship with women."***

————— ***"That's the only thing that won't change about you no matter how many years pass!"***

"After all, that's what I live for. What is life worth without flowers?"

————— ***"Honestly...!"***

To the magus who spoke that proudly with a smug face, she smiled warmly.

That's true. The magus has seen her smile countless times.

However, she never smiled for herself. When this girl sees people feel happy, she wholeheartedly smiles.

————— ***"Thank you, Merlin. I am grateful to you. You have been a great mentor to me."***

The parting words were very simple.

She did not know her destiny. So, she thought it's just a goodbye to a short separation.

The magus felt shy as if he were troubled by the frankness of the thanks.

It was a compliment that he had heard many times before. But...

“.....”

The Magus was struck by an emotion he had never dreamed of and choked on his words.

He couldn't say goodbye, not even with his usual flirty, fluent, and easy manner.

————— **“I've never been involved with the opposite sex in the way you had been. So, I can't really put into words what this feeling is.....For always being here for me, for spending these many years with me, accompanying me, I appreciate you, these were very valuable to me.”**

————— ***“Perhaps, I might have fallen in love with you.”***

Without a blush on her cheeks or any maidenly shame, she uttered her misguided thoughts sincerely and wholeheartedly.

It was her greatest expression of affection.

Of course, it was not “love”.

It was just a misplaced expression of gratitude, the highest form of gratitude she had ever heard of.

For someone who had never been allowed to live a human life, never experiencing personal life she had simply replaced the deepest gratitude she had ever heard in her field with the misguided words.

The last conversation was over.

The ship sailed, carrying the king out to the golden sea. The magus confesses to himself as he watches it disappear.

“..... I was a creature who loved only beautiful endings.”

“It's not that I'm a human being but only look like one.”

“An inhuman being, cold-blooded like an insect and incapable of feeling even like a non-human.”

And yet, I fell in love with only one thing: a beautiful heart.”

“The magus cannot understand human love.”

“Artoria, she yet to know human love.”

“Between the two, they talk about love to each other, is there a limit to irony?”

“No, isn't that just the natural outcome?”

“After all, the two non-human companions wanted to imitate humans. They were never meant to be fit together in the first place.”

GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 05

The Day of Camlann

カムランの日

King Arthur had signed a treaty with Rome and now sailing back to Britain aboard a ship.

Two ships; hundreds of soldiers had lost their lives in the battle against Rome.

But the rewards had been many times greater.

The faces of the soldiers on the deck of the ship were all cheerful, optimistic, upbeat, and positive.

The conflict with the foreign races that had raged for a long period, was finally resolved.

For the bad harvests of recent years, people can only hope for the blessings of the heavens.

But the conflict between humans is finally over.

Soldiers, who were really exhausted from their everyday life, are now brimming with hope.

She stood in front of the helm, watching the soldiers as they set sail, muttering to each other as if they were saying a mantra, "We will somehow manage a way now."

There was a slightly distressed shadow on that face of her that the soldier did not have.

—————"Somehow?.....Yes. At least, while I'm still alive"

The treaty with Rome can only be fulfilled with presence of King Arthur.

They are not afraid of Britain.

They only fear King Arthur.

It's a short-lived peace.

In reality, it would be meaningless without the value of the island of Britain itself in the treaty.

Even so, she swallowed her fears and uneasiness, hoping

“if the people who are suffering from poverty can live in peace, then...”

They'd be arriving on Britain Island soon.

She looks up, raises her face to deliver this victory to everyone.....but notices a strange sight.

There was something on the island's shoreline that shouldn't exist there.

Tongues of fire were rising out of the harbor.

A bleeding soldier with a pale face brought the summons.

-----"Lord Mordred reportedly rebelled! The seven clans and eight lords have joined the traitors, and Camelot has fallen.!"

This was the reward for her services.

Mordred, in King Arthur's absence, took advantage and assembled the rebels.

He captured Camelot, and positioned himself along the coastline to destroy the king's army on its way home.

This is how it will be told in future generations.

The last battle of King Arthur.

A battlefield in the twilight, where chivalry had blossomed and died, scattered like flowers.

The battle of Camlann Hill, the gravestone of countless corpses where so much brilliance was lost.



Mordred's army waited under formation for the king's army, exhausted from the Roman expedition.

It was only with the help of Gawain and Kay that King Arthur and his companions were able to land.

When Gawain heard the news of Mordred's rebellion, he pushed through his wounds and rushed to the battlefield.

The king broke through the siege with Gawain's help. And survived the absolute crisis thanks to the help of Sir Kay, who appeared out of nowhere with his men, to take care of the rear of Mordred's army.

It is said that in this battle Sir Kay was not able to see the king until the end of the battle.

King Arthur got a moment and successfully stepped on the land.

Many of the lords sided with Mordred, and King Arthur was outnumbered, pushed into a disadvantage of strength.

Gawain was killed in a one-on-one fight with Mordred in the first battle after landing.

Although Mordred had no qualms about saying *"Like King Arthur, I will fight in the battlefield as long as I am there"*, she was wounded in the battle with Gawain and had to command from the rear from the next day's battle.

And, the land that had barely survived by far, was irreparably wounded.

She learned the reason for the rebellion, as she repeatedly retreated and pursued, touring the burning land.

The soldiers who agreed with Mordred's rebellion were NOT united by their hatred of King Arthur.

The war never ended. The barren lands. The children who died of hunger.

They had endured those for a long time, always complaining that they could no longer bear it .

"-----aaaaaahhhhhhhh"

"I hope you will endure. I want you guys to keep going forward."

That's what she always told the knights.

The King was indeed an ideal one.

She asked all of us to live rightly without corruption and cleanly as human beings.

If everyone could live rightly without corruption then, without a doubt, at the end of it a prosperous country will rise.

However, how much? How much longer do we have to endure to receive that reward for our patience?

————— ***“Everyone... has already reached their limit... I am the only one who alone was fine...”***

The king was truly an ideal one.

However, because she was ideal, she could not measure the weakness of the people.

Anyone who could look at her objectively at that moment would understand.

That her heart, at that moment, was broken.
On the seventh day of the war.

The fierce conflict between the two armies continued until dusk.
Both armies tore each other apart until all that was left were a few lives in the mountains of corpses.

In that hill soaked in blood, she recalls the words of a certain knight.

["The king understands not of human heart-----"]

Acknowledging that just as the knight said, she grasps her spear, trying to piece together her broken heart.

The sacred sword had long since lost its brilliance. When her heart broke, the star that was on the Earth, froze.

-----“At long last King Arthur..... It's been too long. I've been wandering on the battlefield for a long time to reach this point.”

There are now only two knights left on the battlefield.

What was in front of the king was an armor of a strange form.

The figure of a knight who dragged a sword covered in smokes of boiling blood, Clarent, was like a shape of a ghost itself.

The ghost, who has robbed the country, killed countless soldiers and hungered for something that has no form nor shapes, spoke.

-----“How do you like it? This is the end of your country. It's all over. Over. Whether I win or you win, everything has been destroyed.”

The rebellious knight kept repeating this word in front of the king, "Why?"

“Why not giving up the throne to me?”

“Why do you not accept me as a son?”

“Why was I born in this form?”

“Answer me! Why!?”

The king had no words to answer the knight, nor was she under any obligation to answer him.

The last remaining knight of Britain crossed blades.

The holy spear pierces, burns through the rebel's internal organs, and blows him away.

His helmet shatters.

The cursed sword of the leader of the rebellion, before perishing, cut through the king's skull, taking one eye and the rest of her life expectancy.

The rebel's body slipped from the spear, and she died.

King Arthur -----Artoria, folded her knees, and knelt down using the no-longer-meaningful holy sword like a staff.

She looked out over the corpses of the knights that had become a hill.

..... This is the first time anyone has ever seen her true face, a face probably none wanted to see.

She wept as she looked down at the ruins of Britain, desperately trying to keep her lips closed.

Her breathing choked with sorrow as she tried to stop herself from crying.

—— ***“.....I fought so many wars and stole so many lives. So I would die more miserably than anyone else---- So that I will die hated by everyone. I clearly accepted that. And yet.....”***

She screamed, sobbing.

————— ***“Wasn't it only me who was going to perish?”***

————— ***“Wasn't it supposed to be only the foolish king who was going to die a foolish death?”***

She complained in a barely audible voice.

————— ***“..... Not like this! It's not supposed to be like this! What I was chasing, was not for this result! Britain would end one day...that I knew!”***

————— ***“But I believed it would be more peaceful, like falling asleep, a slumber.....!”***

It was a passion that even the magus never had imagined, a passion that had been hidden under her heart all this time.

It is like a sensation of sorrow and anger that will tear apart the chest of the listener. A wail worthy of cursing the entire world.

-----That would be a bad move.

The magus couldn't say those words. He spreads his hand, trying to reach out to her, but it was really too far from there.

The hero, chosen by the holy sword, entrusted with the holy spear, and burdened with the future of Britain, declares :

————— ***“---- This is different! Absolutely wrong! Even if I allow my own death, I will never tolerate the sight of it...!”***

The one who heeds the king's wishes and answered to the king who fell to the ground and still staring at the Sky (heaven), is not the planet(Gaia) but human beings.(Alaya)

The planet accepts the end of civilization, but the humans, who have now become the planet's spiritual leaders, continue to reject the end of civilization.

It is a defense mechanism for the "human world", made by the collective unconscious of the people.

The soul repository that will forever continue to exist , until the end of human order, drawing on countless records and countless powers in order to allow the history of mankind to continue.

Simply put, it is a loan shark without a limit.

If they deem a person as someone who "can be useful at making human survival continue", they will give that person opportunities without any limit – to enslave them and use their magic as a tool in order to maintain human history.

In the depths of her disappointment, she definitely heard the voice.

[I will provide you with an opportunity.]

[In exchange for the fulfillment of your wish, I would receive your soul in the afterlife.]

She clearly could not have been unaware of what that meant. Even so, the king relied on that power.

If she can avoid this sight of destruction, no matter what price she has to pay, it does not matter.

[-----Aaahhhhh. Aaaahhhhh.]

The vicious miracle picked up her wish.

It was a voice from the world.

The messenger fraudulently, deceitfully, and dishonestly claimed it a miracle.

[a vortex of voices chanting spells]

Time and Space got distorted.

A bottomless swamp-like source of gravity grabbed her.

The king hated the sight of Britain's ruins so much that she refused to save herself, rejecting her own salvation.

For the King, from this moment her quest for the Holy Grail began.

She had fallen into a pit of an infinite loop of hell from where there would be no salvation forever.

GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

Chapter 06

In The Flower Garden

花園にて

The familiar chirping of Cath Palug calling out for him brought back the man to consciousness from his long reverie.

“Ah yes! So it seems. I was locked up, wasn't I?”

The man, still sitting on the rock, looked around.

Graystone walls surrounding the four sides were solid, but there was no hint of subtlety.

Simply put, there is no beauty in it at all.

It is clear that the weaver who crafted this cage isn't very skilled at delicate work.

"Good grief. That must be why men love me so much. I think perseverance is an indispensable virtue for both men and women, really."

The man picked up his staff, which was slung over his shoulder, knocked the ground with a soft sound.

The sound of a faint clunk.

In an instant,----bright colors , filled with vividness of a receding waves changed the look of the stone walls.

The deserted earth surface turned into a sea of blossoming flowers.

The messy stone wall became a wall of black iron with not even the slightest gap.

The structure became more solid and became a minaret that would not be freed nor destroyed even at the end of the world.

There existed no door that can be used as an entrance or exit.

"That's about it. I can't say it's a punishment without this level of punishment."

The man was originally a creature that supposed to be out of touch with the world, but now he is truly out of touch with everything.

It's like a forgotten dream.

No one will call on him anymore, and he won't die.

Even if this man is treated as a hero by people, he will never be counted nor be relied upon as a heroic spirit.

After all, he is not dead yet, and even an end like death from consequences has parted way from his destiny(fate).

An absolute requirement for summoning Heroic Spirits.

Whether in the past or the future, only those who have accepted death become the foundation of people.

That's why the man can't go anywhere.

The magus inadvertently chose to stay here alone, to live and witness his own sins to unfold as he felt at that time.

It's for the better, the man thinks.

If mixing a dragon and a human is full of sin, then a dream demon(incubus) as a son of a human is also wrong.

It is because that half-assed human part that he has become so strange.

"Only the sinless , they say. But I really want to complain about a couple of things against them. If I had been born as a dream demon(incubus), I wouldn't have had such feelings."

"But you are different. You have to think carefully about these things and you even have to choose between selfishness and selfish desire."

But it wasn't all too bad.

Because of his position as a human being and his body as a human being, the man was able to have his own sense of value.

Since the dream demon(incubus) is a creature that is parasitic to the mental activity of the sentient body, it cannot have any sustainable, long-lasting values.

The aesthetics and emotions of the dream demon change with the parasitic brain (things).

The (incubus) dream demon's aesthetic sense, sentimentality, and feelings are altered depending on the parasitic brain.

So, this was an interesting way to live.

Half decadence, and half longing.

“I believe I am the only incubus on this planet who can have a notion of life work or concept of vocation.”

The man sat on the rock and looked through the window.

Gazing at the hill of destruction.

The man knows exactly what state she has fallen into.

What the king's words evoked is a mechanism called Counter Force.

Counter Force is something different from the Throne of Heroes.

It is a defense mechanism generated by the collective unconscious of humans to enslave them in order to keep the human world alive.

There are those who think of it as the voice of the Lord, their God, others feel it as the voice of the world.

Either way, the result is the same on both sides.

Those who comply with the “will of the Counter Force” would be enslaved and used forever as Guardians after death.

That's the difference between a ‘Hero’ and a ‘Guardian’.

“The difference between a heroic spirit and a guardian, although they are both spirits of the throne, a heroic spirit is summoned by people's hope, whilst a guardian is summoned by people's despair.”

The person who becomes a hero because of his own merits, and because of his own sins, is not bound by the Counter Force.

However, those who were powerless - those who mourned their powerlessness while they lived and sought more power to surpass what they had - are trapped by Counter Force.

Counter Force offers a contract of equivalence, a contract for a price.

A miracle is given to a person who is grieving over his or her helplessness, and that person is temporarily made into a hero.

The price is to buy the soul of that false hero after death. In other words that means, completion of a soul that can no longer be saved, even after death.

The king is already a hero and has proven herself as one for a long time.

Thus, she is always beyond the reach of the hands of Counter Force.

-----That, as long as she accepts her death and takes her hands off that sword.

But she made a wish.

She prayed for Britain's salvation.

No...Rather the salvation of the people lost.

And that was the result.

The king stopped still in the hill of Camlann.

She was summoned to every age and all eras from the abyss of death, pursuing the Holy Grail countless times.

Strange as it may seem, she is now a living, breathing Heroic Spirit.

It is not that she obtains the Holy Grail by just becoming Heroic Spirit.

But in order to obtain the Holy Grail, only in response to the voice of Counter Force that doesn't care if she returns or becomes a heroic spirit, she was turned into a heroic spirit.

Once she obtains the Holy Grail, the contract will be completed. After her death, she will continue to fight as a guardian.

The man thought, "Even if that's the case, then so be it. I can't help it. After all, this is her life. The role of a guardian may be suitable for her too."

However, there was only one thing he could not accept.

The girl prayed for Grail even without giving second thoughts.

He does not need to guess what the girl would want.

One day she will definitely get her hands over it and want to redo the day of the selection.

That would be a denial of her own existence.

A contract that would erase all the battles, pains, and sufferings she has gone through so far.

Something that would pretend the days that girl Artoria fought for did not happen, pretend that the girl who is grieving now never existed.

This is the only wish that even a non-human magus can tell is mistaken.



I'm sitting on a rock, looking out through the window.

I have no fingers to stretch, no hands to reach there, so I just stare at the hill of destruction.

Will King Arthur follow the path of the guardian?

Will she be a slave even after her death?

Will she sacrifice only herself and fight repeatedly the battle that will keep killing herself?

Is such an ending the only one she can be given?

When I realized it, I found myself concentrating my whole body and looking at her without moving a muscle.

I knew what she was capable of.

No matter what happens, she will definitely get her hands on the Holy Grail.

Once she obtains that chalice, her wish will come true.

-----“I didn't realize until now how painful it was to wait for an inescapable future without salvation.”

Time does not exist in the flower garden, but now it seems as if even that had stopped.

Every second feels like an unbearable eternity.

Each second feels like a moment from where I want to turn my eyes away.

And then.

After a long, really long time, the girl took her hand off the holy sword.

She did not surrender her own mortality, nor did she despise her own life.

With a gentle smile, she accepted that foolish ending.

-----"Yes, sir!"

[Fou~Fou~]

I feel so happy, I stand up in joy.

The familiar at my feet rushes around me.

-----***“Beautiful, what miracle is this!!”***

-----***“What is going on in this world! I never thought it would end like this!”***

I don't know what happened, but the story finally came to an end!

After a long search for the Holy Grail, she was satisfied with her fate.

She did not drop out because she was tired of fighting nor did she give up.

The curse of Counter Force would not go away like that.

She undoubtedly got her hands on the Grail and then rejected it out of her own free will.

Looking back, it was a long journey.

Choices were made, mistakes were made, and we never got to where we wanted to be.

The maiden's struggle will soon be forgotten.

This country will also become a relic of the past.

Even so, the battle was worth it, still meaningful.

No matter what anyone says or who says it, the king chose the best path.

Even if it was destroyed, there is no mistake in this ending.

Her life had been something to be proud of, a life worth boasting about.

If she had accepted that in the end, there is no more need for me to leave.

—————What you dreamed of setting out to do

—————What you left behind.

—————What you gave me.

All of them are my reward.

More than enough to decorate this little garden of mine with many colors, for a magus whose time is over.

Well, I have to admit that I'm pretty sad that I'm the only non-human left all alone now.

"I was really shocked that the stubborn girl would admit defeat. She must have had a very strange encounter. I can't tell which era it was, after all, all I can see is the present. If I could see the future, at least I could rejoice in the outcome."

The man stretches his back and then sits down on the rock.

As one last attachment, the magus remembered the words of parting.

—————"Thank you, Merlin. I am grateful to you. You've been a great mentor to me."

At that time, I was shying like an embarrassed child. Not out of joy, but it was just so bitter that I could only smile like that.

The words of gratitude that I was so used to hearing so many times as a wise man(sage) turned out to be a heart-wrenching arrow through my chest.

“..... That was a truly troubling time for me. I didn't know there would be times when such insignificant words could sound so painful.”

The magus shrugs his shoulders.

“I've already seen what I need to see.”

“—————No. I've seen more than enough, something much more beautiful.”

It's time to put an end to wandering around the human world like a rootless weed.

The man was given a small palm-sized piece of land.
Most distant prison in the world.

Closed in the far corner of the world.

However, an unchanging garden of memories that blooms more flowers than anywhere, like no other place in the outside world.

The garden of paradise.

GARDEN OF AVALON

A man who has forgotten death, awaits, until the end of the star.

-----"Come on. Run along now, Cath Palug. I'll be fine here."

-----"You are free to go. Go, and make contact with that which is truly beautiful. "

Without any deep feelings, the magus let his last roommate go through the window.

-----"I'm not human, so I don't feel lonely."

-----"What? If you run out of things to do, you can always talk about the beautiful painting."

-----"Fortunately, there are fairies outside the tower."

-----"So, I don't have to worry about any shortage of listeners."

The magus would never be bored of gazing out the single window through which he could see the world.

And thus, the story of the king became one to be told even throughout the far corners of the paradise.

GARDEN OF AVALON

ガーデン・オブ・アヴァロン

*Continuation of
the Dream*

STORY OF KNIGHTS

騎士たちの話

Sir Bedivere

The war has ended.

Her last battleground, the battle that was fought between the split halves of her country, ended with the king's victory.

“Haa, haa, haa, haa —————!”

A knight is running.

The battle is over, the bloody red sun has already set and the darkness of the night is now ruling over the battlefield.

The hill, covered with corpses, is now filled with curses, crying out for the survivors to be taken with them.

Through it all, the knight runs panting.

A rein is in the knight's hand, and the wounded white horse earnestly follows him.

The lone survivors are this knight and this horse.

And this one king, who is laying on the back of the white horse.

---“Your highness...! King Arthur, please come this way—————!”

He must be wounded himself, but the knight sprints through the battlefield with all his energy.

The king he is serving is now on the verge of death.
The king has defeated the enemy's leader in personal combat, but the king received a mortal wound as well.

The wound is fatal even in the knight's eyes.

The king whom they have served will soon reach death.

“Please get a hold of yourself...! If we reach that forest, we shall certainly...!”

He desperately calls out.

—————Or possibly, the knight might have really believed it.

That their king is immortal.

That as long as the guidance of the holy sword is there, the king would never die.

“Haa—————Haa, haa, haa, ha.....!”

He breathes hard, passes over mountains of corpses, and heads for the forest that is not covered in blood.

He knew of the king’s immortality.

Consequently, he believed if he escapes this cursed battlefield and makes it to a pure place, the king’s wound would heal.

No, he could only believe so.

He believed in his own king, unlike those other knights.

The king was isolated in the Court, alienated by the knights, and was feared by the people.

The king, however, did not show his personal feelings even in such a situation and always stayed as an ideal king.

So, the knight felt pride in his young king.

He did not serve his country. He wielded his sword, struggled to be of power, and made his way to be a personal guard of the king as a young man for the sake of this king.

The masked king who did not show his true nature.

The young who tried to allow no personal feelings and to be fair and impartial.

If I stay close, maybe I will be able to see the true face of the king, he thought with expectation.

He just wanted to see the king's true expressions.

Not the face he puts on during battle
nor in the castle, but a real smiling face of a human in peace.

It should appear in the Court when he has been released from his duties.

No matter how perfect a king is, he cannot strain his mind twenty-four hours a day.

But that assumption turned out to be wrong.
The only thing he found out was the truth contrary to his expectation.

He has made it to the rank of Imperial Guard and was able to guard beside the king.

He has guarded the king closer than any other knight and kept watch on the king's behaviors.

But still, it did not happen even once.

His king never smiled for his own sake.

“Haa————Haa, haa, haa————!”

Since when did he feel anger toward it?

The king has accomplished so many incredible feats and has accrued a great deal of glory.

The king, on the other hand, never wore a peaceful face.

Such reality was unacceptable to him.

He wanted to believe that something like that should never ever be allowed.

That is why he wished for his king to be awarded the light.
But he has yet to accomplish that.

The king is still isolated.

That is why the knight continuously did not approve of the king's death.

He can't let it come to an end like this.

He feels that this great king is not rewarded at all for his actions.

---“*Your highness, please stay here. I shall go get someone right away*————.”

In the forest he reaches, the knight lays the king by a large tree.
The situation is a race against time.

It takes half a day no matter how much he hurries to go to the port where his own army is left.

Anyone with eyes could tell if the king's life will last till the morning or not.

---“Please endure until then. I shall certainly bring our troops here———.”

He salutes the unconscious king and runs to his white horse.

——— **“.....Bedivere...”**

Before that.

The king, who should have been unconscious, comes back and - calls out his name....

---“Your highness!? Have you regained your consciousness...!?”

——— **“...Yes. I was having a dream.”**

A faint voice.

But that voice seems warm to the knight.

---“A dream...?”

He calls out, as though looking for something.

The king's consciousness is not certain. He shall go back into the darkness unless he replies so.

_____ ***“Yes. I have not seen many dreams, so I had a valuable experience.”***

---“...That is great. Then please be at ease and rest. I shall go get the troops in that time.”

_____ “.....”

A gasping sound.

It sounds as if what the knight said was unexpected.

---“...Your highness? Have I been rude.....?”

_____ ***“No, I was just surprised at your point. I did not know a dream could be seen after one awakens. Are you saying I will be able to see the same dream if I close my eyes again...?”***

Now, it is the knight's turn to be surprised.

He stutters but replies even though he knows it is a lie.

---“Yes.”

---“If you strongly desire so, you should be able to continue watching the same dream.”

---“I have that experience as well.”

Such a thing is not possible.

What happens only once and not continuously is what people call a dream.

Nonetheless, the knight lies.

He apologizes that this will be the first and the last dishonesty he will perform toward the king.

_____ ***“I see. You are so knowledgeable, Bedivere.”***

The king murmurs as if impressed.

His face is still looking down, and he doesn't even raise his eyes to the knight.

The king breathes so softly that it can be barely heard, and quietly.

_____ ***“Bedivere. Take my sword.”***

The king gives his last order in a faint voice.

_____ ***“Pass through this forest and go over that blood-stained hill. There is a deep lake beyond it. Throw my sword into that lake.”***

-----“.....!Your highness, that is_____!”

The knight knows what that means.

The sword of the lake.

To let go of the sword that was the proof of the king and what protected the king means the end of the king he has served.

_____ ***“-----Go. Once you have accomplished my order, return here and tell me what you saw.”***

The king does not take back his order.

The knight takes the holy sword and goes over the hill with his indecision still in mind.

And...

The knight hesitates to return the sword for three times.

The lake was certainly there.

But he just could not bring himself to throw the sword into it.

If he throws the sword in, his king will disappear.

The knight is unable to throw away the sword from his unwillingness to part with the king.

And the knight turns around and returns to the king.

However, the king had already foreseen that.

As the knight lies to the king that he has thrown away the sword, the king only replies to

————— **“follow his command”.**

To disobey the king’s command is a great sin for a knight.

But still, he disobeyed the king’s order twice.

When he faced the lake, he was hesitant to lose the king's life.

-----But that too comes to an end.

As the knight figures out that he cannot change the king's decision, after passing the mountain entrance, he throws the sword in the lake on his third visit.

The Holy Sword has been returned to the lake.

A white hand appearing from the water receives the sword, and after going through the sky three times, the holy sword vanishes from this world.

“.....”

And the knight finally accepts it.

The king's end.

That the duty that was too long has finally ended.

When he returned to the forest, crossing the hill.

The forest was shining from the morning light.

The battlefield is afar.

Inside of gentle and pure light mist that does not show any trace of a bloody battle...

-----“When I threw the sword to the lake...The sword, the lady of the lake, certainly.....”

The king opens his eyes at the knight's words.



—————“...I see. Then you shall be proud. You have obeyed your king’s command.”

The knight gives a faint nod to the voice that's certainly facing death.

-----Everything has ended.

Chaos in his country would still continue. The battle will not end, and the day of ruin will come around soon.

But the battle of the king has finally ended.

He-----, no, she has fulfilled her duty until the very last moment.

...The light disappears.

Finishing her task, has her last strength disappeared from her body?

————— **“I am sorry, Bedivere.
This sleep will be... a... long—————”**

As if going to sleep slowly

She gradually closes her eyes.
...The morning sunlight fills the area.

The forest stands there quietly, and his king goes into a long sleep.

The knight keeps watching over her figure.

The king that he wished for.

A lonely king that was seen off by just one knight.

But her face is what he wished for.

A peaceful sleep.

In her last moments, the king has obtained peace that she has never been able to obtain.

He was just happy about that fact.

The knight thanks the person who has given her peace and proudly watches over his king.

The heaven is far and the clear sky is blue.

The battle has truly ended.

“Are you watching, King Arthur.....?”

His murmur rides through the wind.

As if sinking into the endless blue, the king that went into sleep...

“.....The continuation of the dream—————?”

.....Sees a distant, distant dream.

fine