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...I PUT MYSELF IN HARM'S WAY FOR YOUR SAKE.

TELL ME, DO I NEED A REASON EACH TIME...
WHY, IT'S THE WHITE HAWK. HAVE YOUR INJURIES HEALED?

I JUST...
YOU ARE BEFORE THE KING!! HOW DARE YOU?!!

YOU THERE!!

NO MATTER...

BUT, SIRE... RAISE YOUR HEADS. I AM SIMPLY ON A STROLL.
I AM
GRIFFITH.
PLEASING TO
MAKE YOUR
ACQUAINTANCE.

HE IS
GENERAL OF
THE WHITE
DRAGONS AND
SECOND IN
SUCCESSION
TO THE THRONE
OF MIDLAND.

LET ME
INTRODUCE
YOU. THIS IS
MY YOUNGER
BROTHER,
COUNT JULIUS.

THE CASTLE
IS TEEMING
WITH AGITATION
FROM ALL THE
SUCCESSIVE
BATTLES AND WAR
COUNCILS.

-HMMPH.-

MY
GRACIOUS
THANKS.

...ARE
 Always
MOST
IMPRESSIVE.

INCIDENTALLY,
SIR GRIFFITH,
THE
BATTLEFIELD
EXPLOITS OF
YOUR BAND
OF THE
HAWK...

I RECALL
WHEN OF OLD
MY SUBJECTS
AND I
WOULD RUN
ABOUT THE
BATTLEFIELD...
ALAS, WHEN
I WAS
YOUNG...

WHEN I
SEE THE
DARING VALOR
WITH WHICH YOU
ALL FIGHT, IT
MAKES EVEN
THIS OLD MAN'S
BLOOD SEEM
TO BOIL...
NOR DO THEY FEED THE PEOPLE. THESE ARE TROUBLED TIMES.

BUT PRESTIGE, STATUS AND THE LIKE DO NOT WIN BATTLES.

SIRE.

COME, THERE IS NO WRONG IN IT.

THEY SAY THAT THE INFLUENCE OF THOSE OF COMMON ORIGIN WILL REFLECT POORLY ON OUR ARMY'S PRESTIGE.

IT IS TRUE THAT THERE ARE STATESMEN WHO DO NOT THINK FAVORABLY OF SUCH PEOPLE...

...IT IS COMMON DRAFTEES SUCH AS YOURSELF, NOT TAKEN IN BY STATUS, WHO WILL HELP FORM THE CORNERSTONE OF THIS KINGDOM.

I ANTICIPATE THAT RATHER THAN NOBLE GENERALS WHO ARE BOUND TO OLD CUSTOMS...

FOR YOUR SINCERE WORDS OF THANKS...

...I AM MOST GRATEFUL.
She is shy... she claims to dislike stern soldiers, and seldom does she venture outside the palace.

My daughter, Charlotte.

Who might that lady be?

Hn? Ohh...
JUST AS YOU SEE... PERHAPS BECAUSE SHE IS MY ONLY DAUGHTER, I HAVE SPOILED HER TO SOME DEGREE...

EXCUSE HER, LORD GRIFFITH.

COME, LET US GO, CHARLOTTE.
PLEASE, BE CAREFUL.

... YOUR PARDON.

YOU BASTARD!! HOW DARE YOU TOUCH THE PRINCESS!!

HEY, PAL!!
PLEASE, PARDON MY RUDENESS.

YOUR LORDSHIP, GENERAL JULIUS.

...

LET US GO, PRINCESS. NOW.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

N... NOTHING AT ALL, FATHER.
Oh, but did you hear?

They say that thanks to his merits in his last battle, Lord Griffith could be made a Count.

I did hear that.
AND HE'S SO MUCH MORE REFINED THAN THOSE AwkWARD ARISTOCRATS.

HE'S SO ELEGANT AND DIGNIFIED, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE HE'S A COMMONER LIKE US.

NOT ONLY THAT, HE'S LEADER OF THE STRONGEST MILITARY GROUP IN THE KINGDOM AND THE BEST SWORDSMA... IT'S JUST TOO MUCH.

ON THAT NOTE, THE OFFICERS IN THE CASTLE ARE ALL SO BOORISH AND RUDE! IT'S DISGUSTING.

YES, THAT IT IS.

HE IS JUST SUPERB... EVEN PRETTIER THAN ME, AND I'M A WOMAN. HOW FRUSTRATING!

THE OTHER OFFICERS ARE PITIFUL COMPARED TO LORD GRIFFITH!

RIGHT, RIGHT.

OH, YES...

YOU MAIDSERVANTS!! WHAT ARE YOU CHATTING ABOUT?!

HEY!!

CHIRPING SPARROWS
AIT'S CUSTOMARY THAT BE LEFT EACH YEAR TO MY WHITE DRAGON KNIGHTS... BUT WHAT?

INCENTIALLY, GENERAL... DID YOU HEAR THE DEBATE... ABOUT THE KING'S GUARD FOR THE UPCOMING AUTUMN HUNT?

IT'S NOTHING!

DOES SOMETHING CONCERN YOU?
THAT THIS YEAR IT WILL BE THE BAND OF THE HAWK.

I HEAR IT WAS DETERMINED BY THE KING'S COMMAND...

WHAT?!

WH... WHA!

GUARDING HIS MAJESTY SHOULD BE AN HONORABLE DUTY PERMITTED ONLY TO FALL UPON THE WHITE DRAGONS, WHO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE REGULAR ARMY!!

THE AUTUMN HUNT IS AN IMPORTANT EVENT FOR THE KING TO FOSTER GOODWILL AMONG HIS LORDS!!

TO THINK THAT... UNTIL YESTERDAY THAT BAND OF ROBBERS... COULD BE PROMOTED AND THEN...!!

THAT... CAN'T BE!!
ARE YOU CERTAIN...

...THIS IS PERMISSIBLE?

WHAT COULD...

...HIS MAJESTY BE THINKING?

WHEN!

IT SEEMS THAT THE GLORY OF THE WHITE DRAGON KNIGHTS, FORMERLY ADMIRE AS OUR KINGDOM'S MIGHTIEST, HAS FADED DUE TO THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE BAND OF THE HAWK...

ONE WONDERS IF THE NAME OF THE COURAGEOUS GENERAL JULIUS WILL END UP BEING ERASED BY THAT OF GRIFFITH...

...DARE YOU....!! HOW....
...one cannot scorn...his ability on the battlefield.

However...

A rumor told by many.

It is a rumor.

......!!

That the band of the hawk is ever victorious is an indisputable fact.

He is surely a godsend in our time of conflict.

Furthermore, the way he has ingratiated himself...his majesty seems to have placed a terribly high value on the boy...

The fighting shows no sign of ending soon. In such case he will continue to distinguish himself militarily.
I WON'T ACCEPT IT....!!

...GRIFFITH MIGHT EVEN REACH THE LEVEL OF GENERAL.

THAT BOY, A GENERAL LIKE ME...?!

YOU MEAN THAT HUMBLE COMMONER WILL SPEAK TO ME ON THE SAME LEVEL?!

I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD OF A COMMON-BORN GENERAL!!
I swear I'll never accept it...

Never...

Such a possibility does exist, it is said...

One never knows what kinds of beasts may be concealed in the forests and thickets.

Hunting is an inherently dangerous thing...

However...

Speaking of customary events...

...?!

...Say what...?
...or perhaps a stray arrow meant to strike prey could at some point fly wildly.

At times an unexpectedly dangerous beast may lie in hiding.

A stray arrow well covered in poison...

...do you mean to say?

Possibly...?! Y... you couldn't!!
GENERAL.

A STRAY ARROW.

...A STRAY ARROW, EH...?

HU HA HA HA.

...HA HA.

INTERESTING......

HEHEH...
A FITTING WAY FOR A COMMONER TO DIE!!
...I put myself in harm's way for your sake?

Tell me, do I need a reason each time...

"For your sake"... huh?
GLARINGLY BRIGHT, FULL MOON...

IT WAS THIS SAME SORT OF...

THAT ONE TIME...

I DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS THE ANSWER I WAS SEARCHING FOR OR NOT...

BUT FOR NOW...
FOR NOW I'LL WIELD MY SWORD.

FOR HIS SAKE.

MASTER OF THE SWORD (2): END
QUITE THE TENACIOUS PREY.
BESIDES, IT WOULD DISPLEASE THEM ALL IF I WERE TO COME FROM THE PLANK AND STEAL THEIR HARD-FOUGHT GAME.

NO, I WISH NOT TO. I WOULD SOON TIRE, AT MY AGE.

WOULD YOUR MAJESTY CARE TO JOIN THE CHASE ONCE?

AH, HOW MAGNANMIOUS
NO!! IT'LL ESCAPE TO THE THICKET!!

GAA!!

YOU DID IT, BOY!!
FEH!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

WHY DO WE GOTTA TAG ALONG WHILE THE NOBLES GOOF OFF?!

IT'S RIDICULOUS!!

NO WORRIES ABOUT GETTING KILLED.

BESIDES, IT'S A LOT EASIER THAN GOING OUT TO BATTLE.

IT FEELS MORE NATURAL TO ME WHEN I'M SWINGIN' THIS AROUND.

IT'S PART OF THE JOB, TOO. CAN'T BE HELPFUL.
SHUT UP!!

CORKUS, AGAIN...?

...FOR GOD'S SAKE, IS THAT ALL YOU GOT IN THAT HEAD A' YOURS?

LISTEN. WE'RE THE GUARD FOR THE AUTUMN HUNT. IT'S AN HONORABLE DUTY THAT UNTIL NOW HAS ALWAYS BEEN RESERVED FOR THE KINGDOM'S NATIVE-BORN WHITE DRAGON KNIGHTS!

IT'S A PRIVILEGE FOR JUST A CHOSEN FEW, AS IT WERE!!

AND YOU... YOU SAY IT'S RIDICULOUS?!

WE'VE RUN AROUND COVERED IN MUD ON BATTLEFIELDS FOR SO MANY YEARS TO EARN THAT PRIVILEGE!! WE'VE RISKED OUR LIVES SO MANY TIMES!!

CORKUS...

...
KILLIN' FOOL!

KEH! IF YOU LIKE SWINGIN' YOUR SWORD THAT MUCH, DO IT ON YOUR OWN!
DO YOU DISLIKE HUNTING?
War is the same way...
Why is it that men enjoy little more than shedding blood?

Today is the first time I have come to the hunting grounds. My father invited me, so I felt I must accompany him.

It is cruel.

But...I do not think that I will grow to like hunting.
「あら、何しているの？」

「私、あなたを待っていたのよ。」

「あ、そうだったの。」

「そう言ったら、私を信じるか。」

「私はあなたのことを信じる。」

「うれしいわ。ありがとう。」
HERE...
LIKE THIS.

...!!
JUST WAIT.

EXCEL... LENCY...

BAH!

HIGH AND MIGHTY.
WAIT FOR WHEN HE'S ALONE.

THE CHANCE WILL NO DOUBT COME.

DRIVE IT OUT!!

HEY, THERE IT IS!!
WHOA!
WHOA!
AHA HAHAA

WHAT IS THE MATTER?

? PBBT.

I...I WAS SCARED...

I'VE NEVER BEEN ON SUCH A WILD HORSE RIDE IN MY LIFE!

OH...

WHAT A SHOCK...! MY HEART IS STILL POUNDING!
YOUR FEAR SEEMS TO HAVE ALREADY FLED SOMEWHAT.

COME, LET US RETURN. EVERYONE IS WORRIED.
ARE YOU OKAY?! HANG ON!!

...AHH.

HEY!! PRINCESS!!

GRIFFITH!!
OUCH! LET GO...
I...I... I DO NOT KNOW.

WHAT THE HELL'S GOIN' ON?!

WHERE'D THAT ARROW COME FROM?!

HN...!

OH, NO. IF WE AIN'T CAREFUL, HIS HEART MIGHT...

NO WAY!!
EVEN IF IT'S JUST A SCRATCH, HE'S DONE FOR.

THAT ARROW'S BEEN WELL SOAKED IN THE DEADLY POISON OF THE CALABAL BEAN.

GRIFFITH ......!!

DON'T GET SO WORKED UP...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
BUT THE ARROW!

POISON, I'D SAY.

AND A RATHER STRONG ONE...

WHAT'S THAT?
IT ACTED AS A SHIELD.

...OF THE KING!!

THE EGG...
DO THINGS LIKE THAT EVEN HAPPEN?!

GOOD GRIEF, THERE'S NO WAY!!

A-ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

IS THAT THE NECKLACE YOU ALWAYS WEAR?

IT'S A MIRACLE!!

REALLY... IT'S LITERALLY A GOOD LUCK CHARM.

THE DEVIL'S OWN LUCK!!

DEVIL'S LUCK...

THIS IS NO ORDINARY "LUCK".......

YEAH...
DON'T SAY THAT!!
I'M FINE. IT WAS REALLY NOTHING...

WE HAVE TO SEE WHETHER YOU'RE INJURED...

GRIFFITH, YOU SHOULD TAKE OFF YOUR ARMOR...

THERE'S A RISK EVEN WITH A SMALL WOUND!!

IT WAS COATED IN POISON, RIGHT?!

BUT ...!!

I'M ALL RIGHT, HONESTLY. IT DIDN'T EVEN GRAZE ME.
IF...IF I HAD BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE A HORSE MORE ABLY...

I'M SORRY......

...THIS WOULD NOT HAVE--

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IT IS OUR DUTY TO PROTECT YOU AS WELL.

LOWLIFE BASTARD... WE'LL KILL HIM!!

ANYWAY, THOUGH, WHO DID THIS? WHO OUT THERE WANTS OUR BOSS DEAD?!

EITHER WAY, WE CAN'T HAVE IT!!

WAIT... WHAT IF THEY WERE AIMIN' FOR THE PRINCESS?
C'MON!!
LET'S GO,
GASTON!!
RIGHT NOW!

I'M GONNA
SEARCH THE
UNDERGROWTH
AROUND HERE
WITH MY
MEN.

A HIGH
PRICE TO
PAY...

EH?
...FOR THIS POISON.

THAT WAS PATHETIC!

WINDHAM CASTLE
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR EXCUSES!!

PLEASE, FORGIVE ME...

H... HOWEVER...

THE CONCLUSION THAT THIS WAS A CULPABLE ASSASSIN AIMING FOR THE PRINCESS MEANS THAT THIS INCIDENT IS SETTLED FOR NOW.

ALMOST NO SUSPICION WHATSOEVER RESTS ON OUR SHOULDERS...

EVEN THE KING SEEMS TERRIBLY HAPPY!!

THE COMMONERS HEARD THE RUMOR AND IMMEDIATELY ENSHRINED THE BOY AS SOME HERO...!!

BUT THANKS TO THIS, WE'VE GIVEN GRIFFITH THE MERIT OF BEING "THE ONE WHO PROTECTED THE PRINCESS WITH HIS OWN BODY!!"
IT'S THE PINNACLE OF INEPTITUDE!!

WE'VE EFFECTIVELY HELPED HIM ADVANCE EVEN FURTHER!!

WHAT AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE IT MADE TO PIERCE HIS HEART...

B...BUT IF THE ARROW WAS MEANT FOR THE PRINCESS...

THE IMPORTANT THING IS, DESPITE THAT, HE'S STILL ALIVE!!

THEN DO YOU SUGGEST THAT I GO BEFORE HIS MAJESTY AND INFORM HIM THAT YOU AIMED IT AT GRIFFITH?!

ENOUGH! BE-GONE!!

BUT... IT WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY SUCH A THING WOULD--

......

CH!

......
LIKE HE WAS LOOKING DOWN ON SOME WORTHLESS THING... THAT WAS HIS EXPRESSION.

THOSE EYES... LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO DAUNT ME.

COMPARED TO THAT COMMON BOY, THERE'S A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE IN BOTH SOCIAL STANDING AND RANK!! AND YET...

RIDICULOUS!! I'M ROYALTY!! SECOND IN LINE TO THE THRONE OF MIDLAND!!

IT WAS THE SAME DURING THE HUNT. FOR ONE INSTANT, LIKE A BEAST HUNTING PREY... YES! LOOKING AT ME WITH EYES JUST LIKE A HAWK'S...!!

COULD IT BE?
THE OTHER LORDS WERE PRESENT, TOO... IT WAS JUST OUR EYES MEETING FOR AN INSTANT...

NO, IT COULDN'T...

IT COULDN'T BE...

ABOVE ALL, THERE ISN'T ANY PROOF.
Hi.

Sorry to call you up so late.

Wait there a minute. I'll be done shortly.
TO BECOME GREAT, ONE HAS TO BE ABLE TO DO MORE THAN FIGHT.

HMM... WELL, MOST OF THEM...

THERE'S MORE AGAIN. HAVE YOU READ ALL THESE?

EVEN THINGS LIKE THIS.

HISTORY, RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, CHEMISTRY, TACTICS... AND THEN QUIRKY ONES LIKE COSMETICS OR COOKING.

...HAVING SAID THAT, HALF OF THEM ARE JUST LIGHT READING...

WANT TO BORROW IT?
SO, YOU NEED ME TO DO SOMETHING?

...KILL A MAN FOR ME.

I'D LIKE YOU TO...

ASSASSIN (2): END
GENERAL OF THE WHITE DRAGONS, COUNT JULIUS.

THE MAN SECOND IN LINE TO THIS KINGDOM'S THRONE.

...IS THIS...

THAT GUY, HUH?

THE REASON...
"I paid off one of the maids to investigate him."

An ordinary person would never typically possess it... as poisons go, it's highly deadly.

This arrow's coated with an extract of the Calabash bean.

FURTHERMORE, only one person has purchased it recently... Apparently, the man said to be the best Bowman among the White Dragons.

I checked with each doctor in town, and only one of them handles this.

"This evening, she happened to see him coming out of Count Julius's office looking like he'd been severely berated."

...It's for those reasons...

But they were discussing the disturbance of the assassination attempt.

She wasn't able to catch any details of the conversation...

...that I'm asking you to do this.

I still haven't talked about this with anyone.

It's fundamentally different from crossing swords with an enemy in battle.

It's dirty work. Failure isn't permissible at all, nor is your face being seen.

THIS IS...

...an assassination.
AND ORDER ME TO DO IT.

JUST CUT TO THE CHASE.

CAN I COUNT ON YOU?

LIKE ALWAYS.

IT AIN'T LIKE YOU.
WHO'S THAT KID?

YOU CALL YOURSELF A SON OF ROYALTY?!

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?!

STAND!!
HIGHNESS... PLEASE, LET THAT BE ENOUGH FOR TODAY...

Now stand up!! STOP RESTING!!

YOUR ENEMY WON'T WAIT FOR YOU IN BATTLE!!

BEGONE WITH YOU, HASSAN!!

AND THAT'S NOT ALL!! AS ROYALTY HE MAY POSSIBLY WED PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AND GAIN CONTROL OF ALL OF MIDLAND!!

ADONIS MUST SOMEDAY BECOME THE LEADER OF MY WHITE DRAGON KNIGHTS AND COMMAND THE MIGHTIEST FORCE IN THE LAND!!

TRY TO GET THROUGH MY DEFENSES AT LEAST ONCE!!

COME AT ME!!

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DUTY IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT WHICH BEFALLS OTHER MEN!!

IT'S WHAT A SON OF ROYALTY IS DESTINED TO DO!!

ああああ
VERY WELL...

ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

IT AFFECTS TOMORROW'S TRAINING.

DON'T COOL DOWN TOO MUCH.
That is a grievous wound. I will tend it right away.

Are you all right?

Young master, do not be disheartened.

Please do not resent his actions.

Ever since the countess died, your father has tried desperately to do all he can on his own to raise you as a knight.
Doubtless he bears the heavy responsibility of royalty... but Master Adonis is only thirteen, and he must miss his mother so.

Your highness, I understand your feelings, but if you could just be a bit gentler with the young master......

I've been unsuccessful with my duties in the castle lately.

Yes, I understand! You may go, Hassan!

Maybe my frustrations got the best of me a bit....

Begging your pardon...

This fierce training these past few days has been somewhat off the mark.

I earnestly hope you will not be unreasonable...
THE WIND?
AN INTRUDER...?!
...NGH...

YOU'RE

GRIFTH'S

I KNOW YOU...
CH!

INTRUDER?!

I'VE BEEN SEEN...
ASSASSIN (3): END
WHAT DISTURBANCE IS THIS?!
IS ANYTHING THE MATTER, HIGHNESS?!
WHAT HAPPENED?!

WHAT'S THIS UPROAR?!

A ROBBER BROKE INTO HIS HIGHNESS' CHAMBER!!

A ROBBER!

SAY WHAT?!

WHAAAA--
IN THE END, NOT ONCE DID THIS BOY GET TO MAKE HIS FATHER SMILE...

HOW MERCI-LESS...

...SUCH A YOUNG CHILD...

MASTER HASSAN...

....!!
THAT ROBBER... YOU WILL NOT LET HIM LEAVE THIS HOUSE ALIVE!!

FIND HIM....!!
HE FELL OVER THERE!
FIND HIM!!
A SEWER...

AHHH!!!

......!!
...THE SOUND OF SWORDS CLASHING...

...GAMBINQ?

THAT'S...

RIGHT.

ALWAYS TRYING TO GET YOU TO APPRECIATE ME...

I WAS ALWAYS DESPERATE.
STOP!!

STOP IT...
Ugh

Srehh

Koff

Koff

....

....
IT SURE HAS ITS PERKS, BEIN' A KNIGHT COMMANDER.

I BET RIGHT NOW GRIFFITH'S EATIN' GOOD STUFF AT THE PRINCESS' DINNER PARTY.

AHHH, MAN.
I'm sure it's just stiff up there...

I haven't seen him since this morning.

That reminds me, where's guts...?

Feh! He's probably just practicin' with his sword alone again, as usual!

Nooo, I got it for myself....

Hey! Shame that.

And without any warning he just--

Now, now.

He's just goofing off! His unit and mine were supposed to have a joint practice today!!
HN?

OH...

CUT IT OUT!

GUTS...
**GUTS!! WHERE'VE YOU BEEN ALL DAY?!!**

**IT'S BEEN A ROUGH DAY THANKS TO YOU!!**

**DID YOU FALL IN THE MOAT OR SOMETHING?**

**AND WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE THAT?**

**WHERE'S GRIFFITH...?**

**HEY! I WASN'T FINISHED...**

**ALL RIGHT...**

...IS AT A DINNER PARTY HOSTED BY PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AT PROMROSE HALL...

!
...an arrow wound!

That's...

Hey, what's with guts?
ASSASSIN (4): THE END
PRECIOUS THING
I feel a bit tired...
THANK YOU...

... 

PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT.

WAIT.
DON'T EMBARRASS GRIFFITH.

YOU MEAN TO GO UP THERE LIKE THAT?

I NEED THIS.

IF YOU'VE GOT BUSINESS, WAIT UNTIL THEY'RE DONE TALKING.

HEH...

...

...
IF WE MUST HOLD A PARTY LIKE THIS...

I DON'T MIND! THEY WILL ALL ENJOY THEMSELVES REGARDLESS.

THEY ARE JUST A BOther...

...FIND I DISLIKE THESE PARTIES.

...IT WOULD BE SO MUCH BETTER JUST TO END THE WAR ITSELF.

IF WE MUST HOLD A PARTY LIKE THIS...

YOUR HIGHNESS ASKED THAT AT THE HUNTING GROUNDS.

IT COULD CERTAINLY BE THAT MEN POSSESS THAT SAVAGE SIDE.

"WHY IS IT THAT MEN ENJOY LITTLE MORE THAN SEDDING BLOOD...?"
TO ACCOMPLISH IT FOR HIM... FOR HIMSELF.

A DREAM.

PRECIOUS THING?
ONE OTHER...
BUT FOR A MAN...
I SUPPOSE IT IS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD.
BUT THAT IS A TOOL BY WHICH THEY SECURE AND PROTECT A PRECIOUS THING...

LIKE FAMILY... OR A SWEET-HEART...?

THERE ARE SOME LIKE THAT.

PERHAPS HE MUST COME UPON ONE OTHER PRECIOUS THING. BEFORE HE CAN OBTAIN THOSE TWO...

FOR NO OTHER'S SAKE.
ONE WHO DEVOTES HIS WHOLE LIFE TO THE THOROUGH TEMPERING OF ONE SWORD.

ONE WHO DREAMS OF WORLD DOMINATION.

...DREAM

...THERE ARE ALSO DREAMS WHICH, LIKE STORMS, DEVOUR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF OTHER DREAMS.

IF THERE IS A DREAM WHICH TAKES ONE HIS WHOLE LIFE TO FIND...
A LIFE SPENT AS A MARTYR...

A MAN SHOULD ENVISION SUCH A LIFETIME ONCE.

...TO THE GOD NAMED "DREAM"...

WHETHER IT SUITS THEM OR NOT, PEOPLE YEARN FOR A DREAM.

WITH NO RELATION TO SOCIAL STATUS, CLASS... BACKGROUND.

SUSTAINED BY A DREAM, HURT BY A DREAM, REVIVED BY A DREAM, KILLED BY A DREAM.

AND EVEN AFTER BEING ABANDONED BY A DREAM, IT CONTINUES TO SMOLDER FROM THE BOTTOM OF ONE'S HEART... PROBABLY UNTIL THE VERGE OF DEATH...

......

......
AND TO THEN SIMPLY LIVE FOR NO BETTER REASON...

...ULTIMATELY TO BE BORN,

I CAN'T ABIDE SUCH A LIFESTYLE.

N... NO!!

IT MUST HAVE BEEN A BORING TOPIC FOR A LADY.

FORGIVE ME, I'VE CHATTERED ON SO.
...This is the first time I have ever talked with a man this way.

The first time I ever laid eyes on you, I thought you were the son of some aristocrat. You seemed so magnificent for someone so young.

When I heard that you were common-born, it was very difficult to believe. Somehow... it is as if... you are nobler than any of the nobles in this castle.

...You say the kinds of things to me a philosopher would say.

And right now...

You were just like some village child used to playing in forests and rivers...

But, at the hunt when you taught me how to sound the reed whistle, you seemed very... simple and carefree...
A WONDROUS PERSON...

I IMAGINE ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS, TOO...

...MUST HAVE COME SO FAR WITH YOU, ATTRACTED BY THAT CHARM.
AND SHOULD ANYONE TRAMPLE THAT DREAM, HE WOULD OPPOSE HIM BODY AND SOUL... EVEN IF THE THREAT WERE ME MYSELF...

THEY ARE MY VALLIABLE COMRADES, DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE DREAM I ENVISION... TOGETHER WE HAVE FACED DEATH SO MANY TIMES.

THEY ARE...

EXCELLENT TROOPS.

SOMEONE WHO WOULD NEVER DEPEND UPON ANOTHER’S DREAM...

TO ME, A FRIEND IS...

...BUT...

SOMEONE WHO WOULDN'T BE COMPelled BY ANYONE, BUT WOULD DETERMINE AND PURSUE HIS OWN REASON TO LIVE...

...SOMETHING ELSE.
WHAT I THINK A FRIEND IS...

...IS ONE...

...WHO IS MY "EQUAL."
SUCH AMAZING CONFIDENCE.

YES...
I have achieved everything so far.

That is how...

To you...the princess of a whole kingdom.

I can even talk like this...

There were days when I had not even a slice of bread to eat.

But now...

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WHAT IS YOUR DREAM?

IT... IT IS A DISASTER!! WHAT IS IT?

YOUR HIGHNESS!!
EVEN HIS SON, MASTER ADONIS, WAS....!!

ASSASSINATION!! SOMEONE SNICK INTO HIS MANOR!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

YOUR UNCLE!! COUNT JULIUS HAS DIED!

THE CASTLE IS IN AN UPROAR!!
THE MIDLAND ROYAL FAMILY CREST. A CASTLE BEARING A CROWN, SEATED IN THE MIDST OF THE HEAVENS.

THE LEGENDARY "TOWER OF TRIUMPH."
SO MANY OF THEM...

THEY SAY THIS NEW CAMPAIGN COULD MEAN AN END TO THE WAR.

DON'T WORRY! MIDLAND HAS ITS OWN GUARDIAN ANGEL, YOU KNOW!

NOW IF ONLY THAT COMES TRUE...

SPEAK OF THE DEVIL...
...THE BAND OF THE HAWK IS THIS CAMPAIGN'S VANGUARD.

I HAVE HEARD...

ARE YOU DEPARTING?

...MINISTER FOSS.

IF IT ISN'T...

...IT IS ALL BUT UNBEARABLE.

...EVEN SO, ABOUT THIS SERIES OF ASSASSINATION SCARES...

MAY FORTUNE SMILE...

WITH GENERAL JULLIUS DEAD, MIDLAND HAS NO OTHER GUARDIAN DEITY BUT YOU.

......

AN EXAGGERATION.

HOWEVER...

GUARDIAN DEITY...

...YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT WILL DO ALL WITHIN HIS POWER.
IT IS NO DEMON.

NO...

BUT A CHILD OF ONLY THIRTEEN LIKE MASTER ADONIS... HOW VERY CRUEL...

SURELY IT IS THE WORK OF A DEMON.

IT IS SAID THAT IN TROUBLED TIMES, SPIRITS MISLEAD HUMAN HEARTS...

MINISTER.

IT IS THE "WORK OF MAN."

AT ME...

INCIDENTALLY, SIR GRIFFITH.

I HAVE CAUGHT WIND OF A STRANGE RUMOR REGARDING THESE ASSASSINATIONS.

STRAIGHT RUMOR?

THAT IT WAS ACTUALLY NOT MEANT FOR HER...

BUT INSTEAD...

THE ARROW AIMED AT PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AT THE AUTUMN HUNT...

IT MAY HAVE BEEN FIRED AT YOU, SIR GRIFFITH...
Also, according to said rumor...

The assassin who attacked you may not have been a Chuder spy at all, but a subordinate of someone within this very court...

The exploits of the band of the hawk you lead are widely proclaimed in many lands.

Impossible.

A mere knight commander...

You humble yourself.

From their viewpoint...

That is an audacious insinuation.

Under a thin veneer, those of the court can be likened to a den of evil spirits. It is not far fetched that any number of them would not be above the murder of another for the sake of maintaining their influence...

Does one kill outside the castle as you do? Or inside the castle? I suppose that is the only difference.

But surely...

I would not say so.
Your pardon.

That being said, I will strive to my utmost outside the castle.

An interesting theory.

He didn't so much as twitch an eyebrow at the mention of Master Adonis......

-Hmph-...

There can be no mistake that the assassination of Julius and his son was Griffith's retaliation. Somehow he must have gotten wind...that the incident at the Autumn Hunt was at the hands of General Julius.

Could this mean that it wasn't his doing at all? No, that can't be true. It would be too much of a coincidence.
THERE WILL BE MANY OTHERS WITHIN THE CASTLE JEALOUS OF HIS Popularity WITH THE PEOPLE... AS LONG AS I SET THEM AGAINST HIM...

AH, WELL ENOUGH. IF BY THIS CAMPAIGN A LONG SOUGHT AFTER PEACE VISITS THIS KINGDOM, IT WILL SETTLE HIS AFFAIR.

COULD HE EVEN KNOW OF ME?

I DIDN'T INTERVENE DIRECTLY IN THE MATTER ANYWAY ... NO. IT COULD NEVER COME TO THAT...

...EVEN SO, HE'S A CRAFTY ONE.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, THERE'S NO EVIDENCE.

HMHM ...

SO THE ONLY GOOD HERO IS A DEAD HERO.

!!
GRIFFI--

LORD GRIFFITH!!
PRINCESS CHARLOTTE.

YES, I AM ON MY WAY.

...ARE YOU DEPARTING ALREADY?

ARE YOU...

WHAT IS IT?

TAKE THIS...

LIM.
NO, PLEASE HAVE IT!

BUT AN ITEM OF SUCH IMPORTANCE ...

IT IS NOT VERY VALUABLE, BUT IT'S A MOMENTO OF THE FORMER QUEEN'S... OF MY MOTHER'S...

IT IS A NECKLACE MADE FROM LODESTONE.

IT IS SAID THAT THE TWO WHO POSSESS EACH HALF ARE DESTINED TO MEET AGAIN.

WITH THE LODESTONE, THE MAN HALF AND WOMAN HALF ARE ATTRACTED TO ONE ANOTHER.

*A NATURALLY OCCURRING MAGNET.

SURELY THIS NECKLACE OF THE WOMAN STONE SHOULD DRAW IT BACK AND SEE YOU SAFELY HOME FROM THE BATTLEFIELD...

IF YOU WERE TO CARRY THAT NECKLACE MADE FROM THE MAN STONE...

BUT...!

THERE IS NO WAY I CAN KEEP SUCH AN IMPORTANT KEEPSAKE OF YOUR HIGHNESS'.

...ACCEPT IT.

NO.
...I swear I will give this back to you.

Therefore once I return from this campaign...

Please...
Lord Griffith...

I have never dreaded battle...as much I do this time.

I...

Be safe...

Please.
YOU THERE, KNIGHT...

YES, HIGHNESS.

PROTECT LORD GRIFFITH

PLEASE...

Y...

YES, HIGHNESS!!

...

EVEN WITH MY OWN LIFE.
CHARLOTTE.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?

MOTHER!

CHARLOTTE!
IT'S MY BUSINESS TO WHOM I GIVE MY THINGS!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN......?

DO NOT FEIGN IGNORANCE.

GIVING GIFTS TO ONE SUCH AS HIM...

YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY.

YET YOU GIVE GIFTS TO A MAN OF HUMBLE BIRTH? PROPERLY SPEAKING, ONE OF YOUR RANK SHOULDN'T EVEN HESITATE TO SO LIGHTLY CONVERSE WITH HIM.

TRY REMEMBERING THAT YOU ARE THE PRINCESS OF MIDLAND.

YOU ARE SIXTEEN NOW, NO LONGER A CHILD.

BUT... MOTHER!!
...IS ONE WHO IS MY "EQUAL."

WHAT I THINK A FRIEND IS...

DEPARTURE FOR THE FRONT: END
AT A TIME LIKE THIS......

YOU LOOK PALE.

WHAT'S WRONG?

C'MON.

NO-THING...

LET'S DO THIS. N...
THE ONLY WOMAN WHO COMMANDS A THOUSAND OF THE BAND OF THE HAWK.

SO YOU'RE HER...

WHAT WAS THAT?

...NO.

...I CAN'T STOMACH IT. A WOMAN PLAYING AT BEING A KNIGHT...

...YOU MIGHT HAVE A USE AS A NIGHTTIME PLAY-THING FOR YOUR FELLOW SOLDIERS...

WOMEN ARE INFERIOR TO MEN IN STRENGTH, WHAT USE COULD THEY BE IN A BATTLE?

...YOUR RANK OF COMMANDER BY SNEAKING INTO THAT MAN GRIFFITH'S BEDROOM?

PERHAPS YOU EVEN ACHIEVED...
... STRONG!!
THIS GUYS...
...SHALL TEACH YOU THE FOLLY OF YOUR PRIVILEGE IN SETTING FOOT UPON IT!!

THE BATTLEFIELD IS THE SACRED GROUND OF MEN!!

I, ADON, HEAD OF THE BLUE WHALE ULTRA HEAVY ARMORED FIERCE ASSAULT ANNihilation KNIGHT CORP...

I'VE GOT NO STRENGTH...!!

I'VE GOT...
KEEP BACK!!
FOOLS...
DAMN YOU!!

BIG SIS!!!
COMMANDER CASCA!!

...YOU'RE WEAKLING!!
IF YOU LET YOURSELF BE LED BY A WOMAN...

...!!
WHAT'S WRONG? NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN?

BUT WHAT I MEAN BY PRISONER... IS YOU'D BE MY ARAN'S HARLOT.

IF YOU COME QUIETLY AS MY PRISONER, YOU CAN LEAVE THIS PLACE ALIVE.

I'LL OFFER YOU A CHANCE.

YOU ADORN YOURSELF LIKE A MAN... BUT YOU'RE QUITE THE GEM, AREN'T YOU?

GO ON.

...!!
GO TO HELL, DOG!!

BIG SIS....!!
BIG...

THEN YOU CAN DIE!!!
RAIDERS, CAPTAIN GUTS!!

GUTS...

YOU...

UWWHH!

...LOUT!
I just feel like swinging this with all my might... until I can't think about anything else.

Anyone will do...

Engagement: End
CASCA
CHAPTER 1
THE ULTIMATE SPEAR TECHNIQUE, WHICH CAN CRUSH EVEN MARBLE, PASSED SECRETLY DOWN THROUGH MY COBORLWITZ FAMILY FOR ONE HUNDRED FORTY YEARS!!

BUT LIGHTNING DOESN'T STRIKE TWICE!!

CAN YOU STOP THIS?!

YOU STopped MY ATTACK WELL!!

HOW NOW, BOY!!
*THIS TRANSLATES AS "ROCK-CUTTING WHIRLWIND."

TAKE THIS!!
HEY!

H...

...?
AH, HELL!

GUTS!!

CAPTAIN...!!
キャプテン!!

CASCA!!

GUTS!!

AHH...

CASCA...

GUTS...!!

...HN!
SWIMMING WITH MY ARMOR ON...

I'M NEVER AGAIN...

UH OH!

GOHO-

HAHAHA...

WHWW
...STILL, WE'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. FALLING FROM UP THERE......

HOW CAN WE GET BACK?

WHAT NOW? AIN'T NO WAY WE CAN SCALE THAT CLIFF...

HE'S FISH BAIT NEXT TIME I SEE HIM.

EWWWW, S'COLLED.

THIS IS BAD... IF SHE STAYS IN THE RAIN LIKE THIS...

MUST BE WHY SHE FAINTED...

HIGH FEVER......
GUTS AND CASCA?!

IT WAS QUITE A HIGH CLIFF...

BUT THERE WAS A RIVER BENEATH, SO SURELY...

SIR GRIFFITH, YOU DO UNDERSTAND?

BUT WHETHER HE'D LAND SAFELY OR NOT FROM THAT HEIGHT...

I DON'T THINK IT'S ANYTHING LIFE-THREATENING, AT LEAST...

IF WE SEND OUT A SEARCH PARTY, WE SHOULD HURRY.

AND SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH CASCA.

HE'D BEEN WOUNDED...

THIS IS HIM WE'RE TALKING ABOUT...
BESIDES, THE BAND OF THE HAWK’S HIGHLY TOUTED RAIDERS CAPTAIN AND FEMALE COMMANDER ARE TOGETHER, ARE THEY NOT?

TO SPARE VALUABLE TROOPS FROM THOSE GRANTED BY THE KING TO CONFIRM THE LIFE OR DEATH OF AT BEST A MERE UNIT COMMANDER NOW WOULD BE OUTRAGEOUS!

IN WAR, CONQUERING THE ENEMY IS MOST IMPORTANT!

N... NO! THAT WASN’T...!

FURTHERMORE, HE BROUGHT THIS UPON HIMSELF BY ENGAGING IN PERSONAL COMBAT!

THEY OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO SURMOUNT SUCH A DILEMMA WITH EASE.

CERTAINLY.

IF THEY'RE ALIVE.
AND CASCA CAN'T LEAVE HERE FOR AWHILE YET...

NOW, WHAT TO DO...

SOME OF THE ENEMY SAW US FALL. IF I KINDLE A FIRE, IT'D BE LIKE TELLIN' 'EM WHERE WE ARE.
DAHHHH!! CAN'T HELP IT!!

THERE'S JUST NO OTHER WAY...!!

GOIN' INTO BATTLE WITH A FEVER?!
THIS'S WHY WOMEN DON'T HAVE ANY SENSE...

JUST DON'T WAKE UP.
WHAT THE HELL'S SHE THINKIN' ANYWAY?!

WHAT A PAIN!

OH WELL! THAT'S THE WAY IT IS!
BESIDES, IT'S NOT EXACTLY THE FIRST TIME WITH HER!
DID THE IDIOT GET WOUNDED...?! BLOOD...?!

MUST BE ROUGH...

.... BEING A WOMAN.

SO THAT'S IT...
 WHETHER YOU COME ALONG OR NOT IS YOUR DECISION.

YOU KNOW HOW TO FIGHT ALREADY, DON'T YOU?

BUT...

...BUT...

CASCA CHAPTER 2
LUCKILY, FALLING INTO THE RIVER SAVED US.

A CAVE BY THE RIVER WHERE?

LIE DOWN FOR NOW. THE FEVER AIN'T DONE DROPPIN' YET.

STUPID!

YOU DON'T REMEMBER A THING?

WHAT THE HECK...

RIVER?

YOU'RE PRETTY EASYGOING... CONSIDERING WE ALMOST DROWNED.

AFTER I HAD IT OUT WITH THAT WHALE JERK, YOU LOST YOUR FOOTING AND FELL OFF THE CLIFF.
YOU WERE SOAKIN' WET AND FREEZIN' TO DEATH TO BOOT.
WHAT COULD I DO?

...WHAT'S THAT LOOK FOR?
HERE
YOU... MYSTERIC BITCH!!

HELLO!! YOU FINISHED NOW?!

BUT I'M THE ONE WHO ALMOST DIED DRA GGIN' YOU OUT OF THE RIVER WITH ARMOR ON!!

I AIN'T TRYIN' TO LORD THIS OVER YOU!!

IF YOU WEREN'T A WOMAN, I'D KNOCK YOUR JAW RIGHT OUTTA JOINT FOR THAT!!

INSTEAD OF ONE WORD OF THANKS, YOU HURL A KNIFE AT ME?!

Perhaps you even achieved your rank of commander by sneaking into that man Griffith's bedroom?

I CAN'T STOMACH IT. A WOMAN PLAYING AT BEING A KNIGHT...... WOMEN ARE INFERIOR TO MEN IN STRENGTH, WHAT USE COULD THEY BE IN A BATTLE?
I WASN'T...

This is why women ain't cut out to be warriors. You're always so damn ready to be pissed about somethin'...

WHA...

...?

I WASN'T...

...born a woman because I wanted to be...
CALM YOUR ASS DOWN!! DON'T MAKE ME FORCE YOU!!

LET GO...!!

SONUVIA!! YOU REALLY ARE SOME KINDA B**CH!!

LET...
I TOLD YA...

HERE! PUT THIS ON.

I WAS WEARING IT, SO IT'S DRY ALREADY.
OH SHUT UP!! LOOK AWAY!!

YOU STILL CRYIN'? WHAT.

SHE REALLY HATES ME.

SHOULDN'T HAVE SAVED HER.

SPEAKIN' OF WHICH, WHY'D YOU JOIN THE BAND OF THE HAWK? LIKE I SAID BEFORE, AIN'T IT ROUGH FOR A WOMAN? FIGHTIN' FOR A LIVING...?

SO...

...I DIDN'T WANT TO BE SAVED BY...

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE...

IT'S PATHETIC.

BOB
...was poor and nestled in a mountain ravine.

The land was barren, and we couldn't really grow much besides oats.

Even so, we were bled dry by taxes for the war effort.

People even starved to death in winter.

Having to go three days without any food was a common thing...
WHEN THAT HAPPENED, ALL WE COULD DO WAS HIDE IN THE MOUNTAINS AND WATCH SILENTLY AS OUR HOUSES AND FIELDS WERE RAVAGED.

I TOO THOUGHT THAT SUCH A WAY OF LIFE WAS JUST NATURAL.

WE WERE ALL USED TO BEING ROBBED AND WALKED OVER.

IT WAS JUST LIKE WITH ANY OTHER VILLAGE...

THE NOBLEMAN APPROACHED MY PARENTS SAYING HE WANTED ME FOR A CASTLE MAID.

WHILE MY FATHER WAS RELUCTANT, HE ACCEPTED THE OFFER.

ONE DAY...

...A NOBLEMAN WHO HAPPENED TO PASS THROUGH THE VILLAGE ON A LONG RIDE CAUGHT SIGHT OF ME.

I THINK IT WAS THE NATURAL CHOICE FOR MY FATHER TO LOSE HIS YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, WHO HADN'T MUCH USE AS A WORKER AND YET ANOTHER MOUTH TO FEED.

THERE WAS NO OTHER PRACTICAL ANSWER. MY FAMILY HAD SIX CHILDREN, AND STRANGELY NONE OF US HAD STARVED TO DEATH BY THEN...
This was his aim from the beginning.

There's no nobleman whimsical enough to go out of his way to save a destitute girl he's never even seen before.

It was obvious when you think about it...
I can't help it. It's natural...

Those two ideas were always in my heart to help me stay connected to reality.
...MEAN THAT YOU'RE CHOSEN BY GOD?

DOES BEING BORN OF THE NOBILITY...
I thought God had taken pity on this miserable, powerless girl and sent an angel...

He was awe-inspiring... an otherworldly spectacle.

So strange... it was as if the image of some saint adorning the wall of my village church had just come to life.

That's how it seemed for an instant to me at twelve years old.

But what that angel extended to me wasn't a fairy tale-like... helping hand in my time of need.
...TAKE UP THAT SWORD.

IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO PROTECT...
...I was afraid.

In any case, I killed someone for the first time.

I don't know whether I stabbed him or if he fell on the blade by himself...

I was never going to let go of the sword with blood dripping from it.

I was so afraid... I couldn't speak or move from that spot.
DEEPLY AND SLOWLY...

HE JUST NODDED...

HIS MAGNIFICENCE... AND THE WARMTH OF THE BLANKET HE GAVE ME FILLED MY HEART.

THE FEAR DIDN'T VANISH COMPLETELY, BUT THE FEELINGS OF GUILT AND REGRET FADED...

...WAS THE REAL HELPING HAND HE EXTENDED TO ME.

BUT THAT...
Griffith, we're finished over there.

Ah...

Wait.

Are these people robbers?

Do as you wish.

Should I do?

What...

...let me.
I can't go back to my village. If I go back alone and unhurt, the official will never believe that you aided me. He's the same as the nobles... I don't know what I'd use as an excuse when they question me...

Besides... it would be a burden on my family.

How can we fight with women and kids along?!

Hey, hey, don't joke around.

We're collectin' war funds so we can eventually set up an army!

We ain't just some thieves!
IF YOU TELL ME TO LEARN THE SWORD, I WILL.

SO...

BEFORE...

YOU MIGHT DIE. YOU KNOW.

WHOA. WHOA. SHE'S SERIOUS.

DIDN'T I TELL YOU? DO AS YOU WISH.

WHETHER YOU COME ALONG OR NOT IS YOUR DECISION.

NO.
YOU KNOW HOW TO FIGHT ALREADY, DON'T YOU?

BUT...

YOU WERE THE ONE...

BUT...

...WHO GAVE ME THE SWORD AND THE BLANKET.

CASCA (2): END
This manga collection is translated into English but oriented in right-to-left reading format at the creator's request, maintaining the artwork's visual orientation as originally published in Japan. If you've never read manga in this way before, take a look at the diagram below to give yourself an idea of how to go about it. Basically, you'll be starting in the upper right corner and will read each balloon and panel moving right to left. It may take some getting used to, but you should get the hang of it very quickly. Have fun!
Back in the day, Guts the Black Swordsman was a top slayer for the Band of the Hawk, an elite mercenary unit led by Griffith, whose calm demeanor and callow beauty belied his fighting prowess and steel will. While in a king’s employ, the attraction between the king’s daughter and Griffith combined with the growing favor of the king toward the Hawk leader raises the hackles of the king’s jealous brother, who plots to have Griffith summarily assassinated. But if the plot fails, the king’s brother will likely have to deal with Guts and his titanic broadsword, and the results of such confrontations are rarely pretty... or easy to clean up!

Created by Kentaro Miura, Berserk is a bloodstained manga juggernaut, equal parts savage violence, gruesome harrass, and black humor packed inside a flaming powder keg and rolled downhill into a crowd of terrified civilians. Let the weak-kneed get out of the way, ‘cause Berserk ain’t about ta give up any ground!

This collection is translated into English but oriented in right-to-left reading format, as originally published.