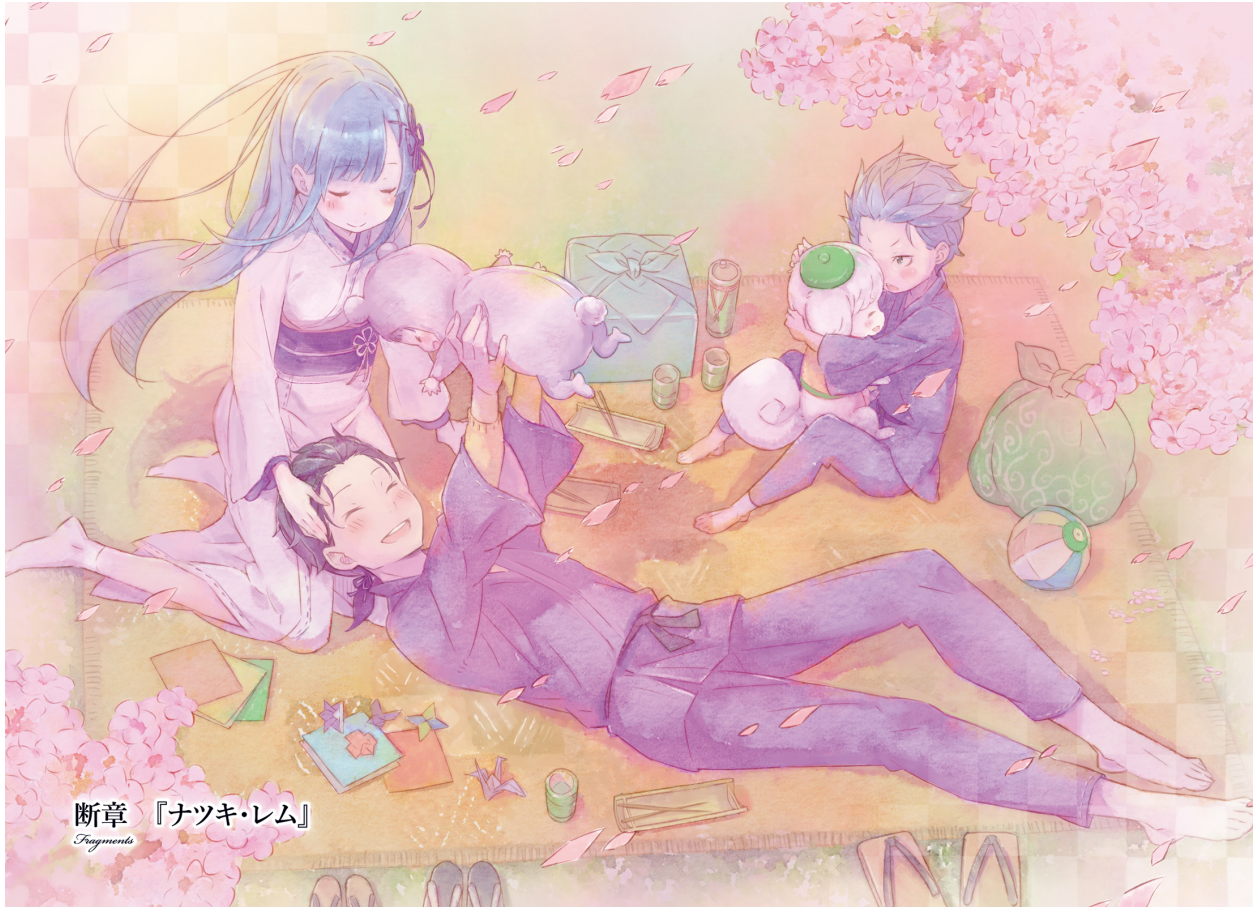


Chapter 1: 2 months



1

—Kararagi city state is a large western country that is one of the four large kingdoms.

It's a country comparable to the large countries the Holy Kingdom of Gusteko in the north, the Volcanica empire in the south, and the Lugnica kingdom in the east, but it became what it is now in a very peculiar way in comparison to other countries.

Kararagi city state's history is quite shallow in comparison to the other three countries. A few hundred years ago, a bunch of warlords of small countries fought in the west—the rivalry between countries was an undying danger zone.

The west combined and became Kararagi city state as a single country.

Each small country changed into towns, and the country managed those towns with the parliamentary governments of the town leaders. In this system, the “Great Heir”, elected by the town leaders, is the one who holds the final decision.

Kararagi, which contains such circumstances, has completely different values in comparison to other countries. It not only developed distinct politics, but distinct national characteristics and culture too.

Wafuu culture and Wasou ¹were some examples, but the most characteristic thing of all was—

[Subaru: I'm sorry, Rem. It wen awful. I tried ma best, but it was just awful.....]

The thick Kararagi accent—it was a dialect that was particularly easy to understand in Kararagi city-state, and it was a part of the unique culture that spreaded. The one who demonstrated it was a person apologizing with his forehead on the floor.

It was a young man with black hair and sharp sanpkau eyes. He was in a Wasou dyed deep blue, sitting upright in a room of tatami mats made of knitted grass, making a pathetic look.

¹ japanese clothing

—Natsuki Subaru was his name.

As you could tell from his terrible Kararagi accent, he didn't come from Kararagi. Although, Subaru didn't come from anywhere in this world anyway. He was suddenly summoned from a different world, went through various experiences, and as a result, he was now in Kararagi. —That's all.

And so, Subaru was apologizing to the girl facing him sitting straight. As she smiled at Subaru's apology,

[Rem: —Please stop speaking like that. It doesn't suit you at all, Subaru-kun.]

[Subaru: It don't?]

[Rem: It's horrible, to say the least.]

[Subaru: That's too harsh! Ah, well, I'm sorry. Okay, I'll stop now.]

She says that to Subaru with a smile, and he dejectedly stops with the poor accent. However, while showing the dissatisfaction he had inside by pouting, he rubbed two fingers together.

[Subaru: Well, I know I'm not good, but you know what they say, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do". I'm doing my best to fit in with everyone else as soon as possible.]

[Rem: It's great that you're doing your best, and I could learn a lot of things from you. However, how should I put this.....Subaru-kun's accent sounds like something you'd hear from someone who isn't from Kararagi and is making fun of the accent, and it's kind of irritating.]

[Subaru: So that's why Kansai people get pissed off by Tokyoites' fake Kansai accents!?!]

[Rem: Tokyo? Kansai accents?]

The ruthless comment sinks Subaru instantly. A question mark showed when Subaru lamented as the girl shook her blue hair and tilted her head.

Her hair that came to the shoulders and her pure eyes were both light blue. Looks that gave off a lovely and kind impression. It was a beautiful, pretty girl wearing a light blue kimono gracefully.

The girl's name was Rem—or officially, Natsuki Rem. Although she had the same last name as Subaru, she obviously wasn't his sister or his relative. They were family in a different way.

[Subaru: But like, umm, yeah. It's not like my speaking has anything to do with work going wrong, okay. Work went wrong just because I'm incompetent.....]

[Rem: Work went wrong? Like how?]

[Subaru: Agh.....ghghgh you see, well...]

Subaru tried to beat around the bush, but Rem questioned him directly. Subaru thought hard about how he should respond to the fastball thrown at him, and he mumbled.

Seeing Subaru worry like that, Rem smiles softly as she said,

[Rem: Tell me all about what happened. Don't worry. No matter how awful Subaru-kun was, even if you messed up big time at a work that doesn't fit you, I won't get mad.]

[Subaru: I messed up big time at a job that didn't fit me and I was god awful!]

Subaru gets crushed by Rem's kind lead-in, and he spreaded his legs on the tatami mat. Like that, he falls over sideways and timidly starts to poke the tatami mat with his finger.

[Subaru: I was too naive. I was beyond naive. From what I thought the basics of manual labor and day labor were, I was under the impression that anyone could do work that was in high demand.....]

[Rem: So you were under that impression...and what else?]

[Subaru: Besides! I was reckless for trying manual labor with a crappy fish fry body like mine in Kararagi where Demi-humans are hired! Actually, I tried to cover up the quality of my work with the number of rounds. However, I had to carry three times as much with one round and I didn't have enough stamina!]

While Subaru's voice cracked, he did his best to give an explanation as he looked back on what happened this morning.

He has been living in a different world for no less than a year now, and he was aware of the fact that he was way stronger than before, but it was still difficult to close the gap in specs between him and genuine different world people.

Incidentally, today's job was carrying goods, but he got mixed with muscular Demi-humans, and it was simply hilarious how Subaru was working with a bright red face without even carrying a large amount.

[Rem: Oh, I see.....so, how'd you mess up? What did you do?]

[Subaru: I tried re-wrapping goods, and I threw out everything.....the damage canceled out today's pay.]

[Rem:The people there didn't ask you to compensate out of kindness, huh.]

Salt was inside the bag and some was put back inside, but most of it mixed with sand on the ground, making it impossible to get it back. As a result, they were forced to cut the schedule short, and so he went home.

Rem sighed at Subaru, who gave an awkward report with a gloomy look, and said,

[Rem: I hope that you come across a pretty nice job, Subaru-kun.]

[Subaru: It really pierces the hell out of me when you say that.....wait, what about Rem? Why are you at home at this time? What about work?]

[Rem: Temple Elementary School is on break today. I told you this morning that it seems like the cold is spreading between kids.Subaru-kun, you shouldn't try and change the subject, you know?]

[Subaru: Agh]

Subaru admitted defeat and groaned pathetically at Rem, who glared at him with scornful eyes.

As you could tell from the daily labor failure story, Subaru didn't have a job. To put it accurately, he had the will to work, but he didn't have a job.

And unlike Subaru, who was job hunting, Rem got a job promptly. It was a job where she taught at a kind of school children institution, which was called “Temple Elementary School”.

Rem was very wanted for general education in this world, as someone who has mastered all sorts of skills like arithmetic and etiquette, and she never stopped working this year.

You might as well say that Rem was contributing 10 times more than him in regards to getting by, although they were in honest poverty. There truly was a wide difference between her and Subaru.

Subaru’s self-awareness of that and his impatience were what made him blame himself more and reflect more.

[Subaru: Damnit.....I’m really sorry again, Rem.]

[Rem: Subaru-kun, you promised not to say that.]

[Subaru: I mean, I did make that promise, but it’s truly pathetic how it is a promise.]

Subaru brings his body up from the floor, sits cross-legged, and bites his lip.

He was proud of Rem being needed by people around her and being useful. However, recognizing it and being spoiled by it was a different story. Not to mention, the one who wanted this—the one who wanted to live supporting each other was Subaru, after all.

By no means was it to let Rem do all the supporting and get spoiled as much as he wanted.

[Rem: It's okay, don't worry. They'll all realize how amazing Subaru-kun is eventually. You just haven't found a job that goes well with your great talents yet. So, keep trying. Because I'll work for money!]

[Subaru: That's exactly how someone becomes a typical gigolo!]

[Rem: Ah, Subaru-kun!?!]

Subaru bestirred himself and stood up before he melted in the huge, spoiling aura. Subaru leaves behind Rem, who was surprised by his energy, and he ran towards the room's entrance.

And then—,

[Subaru: Just you wait, Rem! I swear I'll find a job! I'll support you!]

[Rem: Okay. Please come back before dinner.]

[Subaru: Damn it! I will support you, you hear me—!!]

Rem waves Subaru goodbye, and he rushed out of the room — out of the tenement house while being on the verge of tears.

He puts on his zoris ²and runs off to the streets of Kararagi.

Job hunting—even in a different world, it was extremely difficult for people who were unqualified and had a blank period.

—Kararagi city-state's 2nd town, 'Banan'.

² Japanese sandals <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/zori>

The next largest town after 'Kyo', the first town, located west of Kararagi — that is where Subaru and Rem, the Natsukis, live.

The streets are made up of Wafuu³ architecture, which is culture characteristic of Kararagi, and it seems it is deemed the cradle of the Wafuu style, which spreaded all over Kararagi. But well, to Subaru, Wafuu architecture was something that didn't really make him feel like he was in a different world at all.

Because the streets didn't make him feel like it was a different world, but rather—

[Subaru: —It feels like the Edo Period, or going back a bit forward, the Meiji Era and Taisho Era.]

As Subaru coughed, he saw buildings constructed with wood lined up nicely. Wafuu architecture, which stood on the streets, was also characteristic of the stores with open doors.

People walking down the road were wearing zoris(草履) and kimonos(着物), which were wasou(和装), but they were all true different world people. Among those that had hair color and looks that differed from Subaru's common knowledge, there were a lot of Demi-humans representing beasts.

Japanese culture that forced itself into another world—Subaru had that impression of Kararagi customs, including the Kararagi dialect that sounded just like Kansai dialect.

[Subaru: It's like people in a fantasy cosplaying. Well, the material is nice so it looks good on everyone, and it all comes together perfectly, though.]

³ Means Japanese style

It is very common for manga and games to have countries with Japanese culture in fantasy worlds in the first place. The problem was that it still felt weird actually confronting the scene, and it felt like that for longer than he'd expected. It was a feeling Subaru finally took in after a about a year.

That being said, he still had doubts even if he gulped down the weird feelings.

He couldn't believe that Kararagi's culture uniquely developed from zero. This culture had to have started spreading with people who came from the same place as Subaru.

In other words, people who came from a different world like Subaru and that steel helmet guy, Al—

[Subaru: —Stop it, just stop. Deal with the more realistic problems in front of you. Even if you solve the world's mysteries, you still don't have a job. I'm saying this to myself, talk about depressing.....]

How much was this world's history influenced by people who came from the same place as Subaru? He should worry about that when he had more room to think and live. He'd put it off for now.

Right now he had to focus on job hunting, and he had until dinner for that.

[Subaru: It's already afternoon, so I actually don't have much time.....! Anyway, first I'll go to the public employment security office and.....]

[???: What's wrong, Su-san? You're walking with a serious look...what a scary face!]

[Subaru: Don't be so rude about people's serious looks.....]

Someone made a rude point about Subaru's face as he frowned and walked around town. Once Subaru turned around to see whose voice it was, he saw a tall man right beside him. He'd seen his face before.

[Subaru: With that dog face, you must be Hal-san. Don't startle me.]

[Halibel: "A dog face". Don't put it that way. I'm a wolf of dogs.]

The one who opened his big mouth and laughed at Subaru's words was a demi-human with a wolf face, not a dog face. He was a tall one with black hair and a black kimono, and he bit on a golden kiseru with his back teeth. A lot of ordinary dogs were petite, and he had the credibility to call himself a wolf as he was one head taller than Subaru. However, his eyes were always narrow slits, and so if we're talking about dogs, he looked more like a fox rather than a wolf.

The name of the wolf he called Hal-san was Halibel. He was Subaru and Rem's neighbor of the housing complex 'tenement house' they lived at, and you could say that he was the first acquaintance they made at Banan.

[Halibel: You look like you want to say, "If you're not a dog, then you're a fox". Su-san, you just don't know when to stop, do you?]

[Subaru: Don't make complaints based off people's looks. I really was thinking that, though.]

[Halibel: I am neither a Kobold nor a Fox. I'm a Wolf. We are a rare species on the verge of extinction, so don't make that mistake. It kinda feels like I'm carrying the pride of our kind, you know?]

[Subaru: If you're going to carry it, do it a little more seriously.]

You'd obviously want to choose someone that could at least carry the pride. As for Subaru, pride — or at the very least, the wolves' title, who were on the verge of extinction, wasn't something he'd leave in the hands of Halibel. He may be taking care of them, but that didn't mean he'd immediately trust him.

[Subaru: I can't chat with you right now. I'm burning with the will to work. Don't get in my way.]

[Halibel: Come on, Su-san, that sure is a cold way to greet me. I'm really depressed, so stop it. Besides, even if you're burning with the will to work, you don't have a job. It's just cinders.]

[Subaru: I'm also really depressed, so can you not!?!]

Subaru's neighbor's counterattack makes his voice crack. Halibel shook the kiseru in his mouth up and down. After that, as he exhaled smoke that entered his lungs, he said,

[Halibel: Go ahead and get more and more depressed. A man that troubles such a good wife is hopeless. How brave of her to not complain once even though her husband has no job and indulges himself in drinking.....I feel bad for Rem-chan.]

[Subaru: I don't indulge myself in drinking! But it hurts how that's the only thing I can deny! To tell you the truth, I've been troubling Rem.I really can't compete with her.]

Subaru dropped his shoulders dejectedly as his current worthlessness was pointed out objectively. Halibel went "Harharhar" at Subaru happily while he was like that.

[Subaru: Did you come here to make fun of me? Or did you come here to cheer me up?]

[Halibel: We're both jobless, and I thought we could have a pity party or something.]

[Subaru: No way! It would be too much to have a pity party with another unemployed person right after I almost became a gigolo!]

Subaru shakes off Halibel, who came closer to him, and he full on rejects being treated as his partner.

Besides, strictly speaking, Halibel wasn't jobless. This glib talking neighbor was a tenement house manager—whether he was actually doing manager like work or not, he had the title of a manager as a vocational worker.

Although he had only ever seen him napping, grooming, drinking, or using his Kiseru, he was employed.

[Subaru: Basically, Hal-san is a dazzling being out of my reach.]

[Halibel: Don't say something so sad, we can be friends. It's true that I can get money just by lying down all day and playing with the fray spots of my kimono, but putting that aside, I think it's precious how Su-san is working hard to earn money, you know? Isn't it just lovely?]

[Subaru: Shut up, you slacker!Actually, who did you go to to become a manager?]

[Halibel: Hmm, sorry to disappoint, but I just happened to be acquaintances with the owner of the tenement house. With that connection, I was able to be a couch potato.....Sorry, Su-san, I'm a winner.]

[Subaru: Damn you!!]

Subaru hisses without hiding his anger as he listened to his shaky story.

In the end, personal connections meant everything in an environment where even academic backgrounds were useless. And Subaru didn't have any personal connections, even if you were to disregard the fact that he was in a different world.

A man that traveled two worlds and failed to create relationships—that was Natsuki Subaru.

[Subaru: Struggling alone, and to top it off, jobless.Looks like I'll just have to wait for my death.]

[Halibel: You have Rem-chan. Struggling alone is an exaggeration!]

Halibel suddenly opens his large mouth widely, and he bursts into laughter as he looked up at the sky. Subaru, seeing that dog face in the corner of his eye, sighed deeply.

[Subaru: Look, you know my situation. I'll be going job hunting. My goal is a disposable income of 15,000, and the condition is that I pay for traveling expenses and put it into pension and insurance.]

[Halibel: I don't have actual work experience, but how'd you come up with that condition?]

[Subaru: I thought I'd go for a dream that was just barely realistic. Now I want to apply this condition to the common knowledge here and find out the minimal requirements for landing a job.....]

Freeing himself from being supported by Rem was his biggest goal at the moment. However, he wanted to avoid temporary measures, such as choosing jobs that won't last long and dead-end ones.

Subaru's goal was to get a job he could do for his whole life, one that he could be proud of as a family head.

[Subaru: —And so, I came to the public employment security office.]

Out the Banan town areas, at a place away from the crowded, thriving street, there was a store.

It was the 'employment agency' which Subaru called a public employment security office. It was a place that acted as the bridge for interpersonal relationships with things like job arrangements and introduction letters for people.

There were several employment agencies in Banan, but Subaru always used the same one. Because of that, he was friends with the shop owner—

[???: —Ugh! It's dimwit!]

The moment he showed up at the reception desk, the man in the shop suddenly welcomed him harshly.

[Subaru: That's one rude way to greet a client, and you shouldn't use such a cruel nickname.]

[???: You're the one that's rude! You screwed up at the goods carrying scene, didn't you!? I was told to never refer such a good-for-nothing!]

[Subaru: Aaa, the foreman told me to take care on the way home, I didn't want to know about this side of him.....!]

Subaru collapsed as he was called incompetent, and a lizard faced man is what appeared before him—he was a lizard man. Lizards weren't rare Demi-humans, but he was so fat that he had a strangely large width, and so he looked more like a frog, rather than a toad. It was characteristic of him to wear a cute apron.

Crane Donahue was his name, and he was the owner of this employment agency officially recognized by the town. Employment agencies officially recognized by the town were scarce, and it was known as conscientious work.

However, the man that was supposed to be conscientious looked down on Subaru in an annoyed way as he said,

[Crane: How do you mess up at carrying goods? You're going to become a job hopper at this rate.]

[Subaru: Er, well, you see, I was totally focused on trying to do as much work as others and.....]

[Crane: Daily allowances have fixed rates. You could've made profit by sitting back and letting everyone else do the work.]

[Subaru:That would be unfair. I don't really want to do something unfair...]

[Crane: Why are you so insistent!? I don't care if you do a good job, good grief.....]

Subaru grumbled to protest, and Crane folds his crest. Then, he suddenly noticed someone standing behind Subaru.

[Crane: Oh! It's Halibel! Sorry for not contacting you for quite a while!]

[Halibel: Oh, it's fine, don't worry. I just came to check on Su-san's future.]

[Subaru: Future...well, anyway.....]

Subaru cleans off his knees, stands up, and compared Crane and Halibel. After that, he pointed at Halibel and tilted his head at Crane.

[Subaru: You know this playboy?]

[Halibel: Playboy! Playboy! Why does it have such a lovely ring to it? From now on, I'll be calling myself 'The Eternal Playboy'. Does it sound good? Does it sound bad?]

[Subaru: What's bad is that you actually like it.]

While Subaru joked at Halibel's name sense, he waited for Crane's reply. Seeing that exchange, Crane groans as he folded his big arms.

[Crane: Dimwit.....I mean Mr. Subaru, you made it big. I knew you could do it.]

[Subaru: You can't just blatantly change the way you treat someone!]

[Crane: Well, of course I'm going to use 'Mr.'. Who do you think Mr. Halibel i.....]

With a look of shock and fear, Crane stopped when he was about to say something. Subaru raised an eyebrow at that unnatural reaction, but Crane went “Oh” while looking away as he said,

[Crane: Mr. Halibel is, you know.....a—an eternal playboy.]

[Subaru: He got that name just a second ago.]

[Crane: Anyway! Moving on! So what’s the matter? I can refer Mr. Subaru! But, don’t ask for a relaxing gravy train, alright? The goods carrying one was your best shot.]

[Subaru: It doesn’t have to be a relaxing gravy train. I just want you to refer me to a job with a future. The conditions are negotiable, but please give me one for a family head.]

[Crane: That’s the first time I’ve been given the condition “One for a family head”, but.....]

Crane briefly scanned the shop as he puzzled over Subaru’s request.

It was an employment agency approved by the town, but the store itself was neatly taken care of. The one floor wooden shop had minimal chairs and tables, and the bulletin board wall was filled with help wanted advertisements and wanted people forms. People searching for jobs would select a job from the posters, and the people who wanted a job done would ask Crane and he’d put up a form. That was the sort of system it had.

[Subaru: If I accept exterminating a dragon and fail, your reputation would be damaged as the one who got me the job.]

[Crane: I would never ask you to do that, and I’d leave the country once something like dragon extermination was announced.]

[Halibel: If it was in an empire, I'd exterminate a dragon with pleasure. If you have a good plan to kill it, you might even defeat the kingdom's God dragon. Then you could take the country and.....]

[Subaru: Oh! Crane! That's it! Let me check out that 'Zarestia Bed Search'!]

Subaru's voice interrupts Halibel, who lit his Kiseru and puffed it. Subaru approaches the wall dramatically, and once he tore off the poster, he read the contents aloud.

[Subaru: Let's see..."Recruiting investigators for the bed of the great spirit Zarestia! The habitat of the Great spirit that has been a mystery for many years — the time has come to recruit members to explore it! Working conditions are negotiable, and the reward depends on results!" This! This.....this doesn't sound good at all.....]

[Crane: Why are you talking so loudly to yourself?! Also, I'll be putting that back. Give it here.]

When Subaru's eyes turned lifeless from the absurdity of the recruitment details, Crane confiscated the poster. Then, when he looked at the details, he groaned an "Oh" as he said,

[Crane: I forgot to take this off. Applications closed quite a while ago. It's just a crappy recruitment form I left on there just because I was told to do so. Just forget about it.]

[Subaru: Did it actually happen?]

[Crane: There are a lot more idiots in this world than you think.]

Subaru felt depressed when he heard Crane reply as he shrugged.

Involving yourself with great spirits would be nothing but a suicidal act. Just normally coming in contact with them would be reckless in itself. —I just hope that those daredevils died peacefully.

That was Crane's misinterpretation of Subaru's facial expression, and when he touched his own apron he said,

[Crane: I now know that you're so cornered that you'd jump at a job that's pretty much suicide. So.....I really don't know if I should give you this.....!]

[Subaru: So you're saying you have a job that's better than pretty much suicide!?!]

[Crane: It depends. But well, you have to work for your cute wife.....!]

Crane took out an application as if to say to him, "This is all I can do for you now!". Subaru nervously accepts what he held out to him, and he looks at the application details.

[Subaru:A maid at Riffen Magoji's place?]

[Crane: It's a short term job that lasts for one month. You'll be doing subordinate work, but Mr. Subaru has the skills, so...]

Saying that, Crane shows off his apron as he pinched it. The apron was way too cute for a giant like him, but the flower pattern on it was what emphasized that impression in particular.

[Subaru: An old fart with a lizard face may be wearing it, but it still looks great.]

[Crane: You put it on yourself! My wife really liked it, though!]

[Subaru: That's just because I was sewing buttons back on. How's that related to this?]

[Crane: Take a good look at the guidelines. It says that it's a workplace with a lot of women. Good thing you have a special skill to attract women.]

[Subaru: You're just jumping to conclusions! Besides, I'm more worried about the point "Only taking young men".]

Only taking young men at a workplace with lots of women—he could not figure out what went on over there.

According to the description, he just knew that it was subordinate work — sorts of chores. They weren't looking for special qualifications and inhumane manual labor. If only he didn't refuse being a manservant...

[Subaru:Thanks, but would I even stop being a day laborer with this?]

[Crane: As if you could find a lifetime job out there so conveniently. Listen up. First you gotta start from the bottom, get your face and name out there, and then you'll find your favorite after earning trust. Don't you know that?]

[Subaru: You referred Rem to a job at Temple Elementary School at the start.]

[Crane: Well, that's because Rem-chan is cute.]

It was an irrefutable argument. You could not argue against Rem's cuteness. Stuff like Subaru's poor excuses weren't effective in society.

[Crane: Kararagi isn't nice enough to recognize an unemployed man as a full-fledged man,]

[Subaru: I came here to look for a job, didn't I!?!]

He came to the public employment security office and was being treated coldly because he was unemployed. This was proof that, despite having the will to work, he was lacking the most important thing: trust from society.

That being said, Crane's judgement was fair. Subaru dropped his shoulders in defeat.

[Subaru: Please make me a letter of introduction. I will do my very best to be liked.]

[Crane: Yep, do your best. Mr. Riffen is a brave dealer, but he's known to be a calm person.]

[Subaru:Brave warrior⁴?]

[Crane: Brave dealer.]

Subaru tilted his head at the slight difference in nuance, but Clay wasn't concerned about that as he finished writing the letter of introduction fluently, carefully put it into an envelope, and gave it to Subaru.

[Crane: On the morning of the day after today, go to Mr. Riffen and tell him that you came from me.]

[Subaru: Okay. Thanks as always.]

⁴ Subaru thinks he's saying brave warrior because brave warrior(猛将: moshou) and brave merchant(猛将: moshou)

[Crane: And lastly, be careful! Sheesh, don't mess up this time!]

He puts the letter of introduction in his pocket and left as he waved goodbye to Crane, who went back inside the shop. Then, he went back to the main street with Halibel, who had been smoking his Kiseru at the street.

[Subaru: But, damn.Hal-san sure has a lot of free time.]

[Halibel: Why say that all of a sudden?]

[Subaru: It looks like you're jobless, gazing absentmindedly at other people job hunting. That's too awful.]

[Halibel: When there's someone below you, you cheer them on, right? I'm the group that gives you courage.]

[Subaru: Courage isn't what I'm getting from this. It's more like something dark, I think.]

Subaru replies to Halibel cracking jokes, and he sighs. Although, Halibel still was actually the employed person here, and so Subaru was the one who had a low position in society.

[Halibel: Still, you're having quite some trouble with job hunting. What did you do before coming to this town?]

[Subaru: ——]

Halibel's casual questioning makes Subaru hold his breath for a moment.

However, he quickly smiles to hide his hesitation and he shrugs as he went, "Well".

[Subaru: I moved from place to place in Kararagi with Rem. I'm glad we settled down this town. It's all thanks to you that we were able to rent a tenement house. You're a lifesaver.]

[Halibel: About that, you should thank Elder instead, the one who referred you. Connections are a way of life. If you're blessed with them, that shows you have something to offer.]

[Subaru:About that, I don't contribute much at all. It's all thanks to Rem.]

Subaru replies as he thought, "That's the only thing I'm 100% sure about", and he stretches lightly in the crowd.

As he was temporarily relieved of the burden he had thanks to getting a job.

[Halibel: Moving from place to place in Kararagi.....eh.]

3

[Subaru: Sorry, Rem. I did ma best, but.....]

[Rem: —Subaru-kun?]

[Subaru: Ah, yes, I'll stop. I apologize. And my next job will be short term.]

Subaru was sitting straight on the tatami mat. He showed the letter of introduction he got from the employment agency to Rem, who had been working in the room's kitchen for the evening. Rem, who stopped cooking dinner, points out Subaru's poor Kararagi accent, and when she took the letter of introduction, she looked over the details.

[Rem: It may be a short term job, but it's still a step forward. Subaru's breakthrough begins here. I can see it. Subaru-kun will be respected by a lot of people, and they'll build a bronze statue.]

[Subaru: I wonder if ophthalmology exists in this world.....]

When he gave a bitter smile at the exaggerated statement, Rem went "Oh" as she got surprised while looking at the letter of introduction.

[Rem: This is a job at Riffen-sama's residence.]

[Subaru: Yeah. Do you know Riffen-san?]

[Rem: No, we aren't direct acquaintances. Among the kids I teach at Temple Elementary School, there are also ones from merchant houses, so I sort of know about Riffen-sama, the brave merchant.]

[Subaru: There it is, 'Brave Merchant'! He's not like a fierce shogun or anything, right?]

[Rem: Haha, fierce shogun.....S—subaru-kun, please don't make me laugh.]

Rem chuckled, like she got a kick out of what Subaru said, and she breaks into a smile because of Subaru's question. Then, Rem said, "Listen" to Subaru as she held up a finger.

[Subaru: Oh, just like a teacher.]

[Rem: Don't make fun of it. Brave merchant is a way to point out a merchant's rank in Kararagi. Excellent merchants are given the ranks 'Great Merchant', 'Wealthy Merchant', and 'Brave Merchant'. It's an honor.]

[Subaru: 'Great' and 'Wealthy' makes sense, but isn't 'Brave' kinda weird?]

[Rem: Because in Kararagi, where trade flourishes, achieving success in trade is practically like distinguishing yourself in a battlefield. Riffen is also someone who's respected.]

Rem replies like that, and she looks at the letter of introduction a bit nervously. Seeing Rem somewhat uneasy, Subaru knits his brows, and he called her name.

[Subaru: You seem kinda uneasy. What's up?]

[Rem: Well, according to the rumors I've heard, there are a lot of women working at Riffen-sama's mansion.....so a handsome, young man like Subaru-kun working in a workplace like that would be.....]

[Subaru: You're being pretty subjective!]

While Rem expressed her considerably subjective opinion, she folded and unfolded the letter of introduction. Subaru somehow sensed what Rem was worrying about, judging from her unease.

[Subaru: Silly.]

[Rem: Oww. S—subaru-kun?]

Rem holds onto her head after suddenly getting chopped by Subaru. Subaru says "Good grief" to Rem, who had a surprised look, and he sighed.

[Subaru: Don't worry about such odd things. Who do you think I am?]

[Rem: I'm sorry. But I'm worried now. Riffen-sama, as someone who hires tons of women, will see cute ol' Subaru-kun and he might not feel turned on.....]

[Subaru: Ughhhh! That's a little different from what I thought you were worrying about!]

Rem's one-sided worrying dumbfounds Subaru, and he changes the topic.

[Subaru: But cute? Just look at my eyes. How are they cute?]

[Rem: I just can't get enough of the manliness of Subaru-kun's eyes.]

[Subaru: What exactly do I look like to you!?!]

There were a lot of things about Rem's assessment of Subaru that other people couldn't really understand. In any case, Subaru held onto Rem's shoulder, as if to tell her that she shouldn't worry and to calm her down.

[Subaru: You don't need to worry. Rem is the only one for me. That goes for when I'm at a place with a bunch of girls too, got it?]

[Rem: Fuwa.....ye—yesh, got it. Subaru-kun.....]

As he whispered while patting Rem's head, her face turned red, and she nods. Then, Subaru also felt affection for Rem, who became submissive to him for a bit.

When Rem lifted her head slowly, her wet eyes met his up close. They get closer and closer, close enough to feel each other's breath—then, a pot whistled.

[Subaru: Owaa!] [Rem: Kyaa!]

The sound of a pot lid falling breaks the silence. Rem rushes to the kitchen in a panic. She turns off the heat of the cooking stove that used a magic crystal, makes sure the pot settled down, and rubbed her chest in relief.

[Rem: —Haha] [Subaru: Haha]

Then, they both smiled at each other at the same time.

And so, they laughed for a while, and when that settled down, Rem clapped as she went, “Alright”.

[Rem: Let’s eat. Subaru-kun, please set up the table.]

[Subaru: It’s more like a low dining table, though.]

While still feeling slightly awkward, the two of them start to prepare the food. When he moved the low dining table against set against the wall to the middle of the room, Rem took off the lid of the pot vigorously.

A steamy pot and the smell of delicious, warm vegetables —today’s menu was ‘Mizutaki⁵’.

[Subaru: A pot. It’s nice to have every now and then. It’s the best when you have it with Ponzu.]

[Rem: I kind of wanted to eat something sour with assorted vegetables. Subaru-kun, are you fine with sour stuff?]

[Subaru: I like it. I’m surprised. You like sour stuff?]

[Rem: No, I really just kind of wanted to eat it, but.....]

⁵ [Hot pot dish(nabe)]

Rem curiously puts her finger on her jaw and tilts her head slightly. However, Subaru ignored her for now as her actions weren't unexpected to him. Besides, Rem choosing a menu giving priority to what she wanted to eat was a good sign.

Since it was proof that she was slowly getting out of the habit of always prioritizing Subaru in one way or another.

[Subaru: Delicious! You did awesome today again!]

[Rem: My.....for you to be happy that you have a cute wife who's a good cook...I'm embarrassed.]

[Subaru: Well, I really was serious. I'm a such a lucky guy.]

No matter where they moved, Rem was always good at cooking. It was tough at the start with different kitchen utensils and different ingredients, but after living in Kararagi for a year,⁶ they were adapting nicely.

It's just that there were a few parts they couldn't adapt to, unrelated to tastes.

[Subaru: Uuu...my stomach hurts. I can't move an inch.....]

[Rem: I'm stuffed. Subaru-kun, my lap is free now.]

[Subaru: Yay! I'd like to make a reservation.]

[Rem: Reservation taken. A special seat, just for Subaru-kun. Hop on.]

⁶ No, this is not mistranslated. It says one year passed.

Rem taps her closed lap, and Subaru falls onto it. When he left his head on her soft lap, he felt his whole body being wrapped in happiness.

Their stomachs clearly took in more than a two person meal, and their stomachs relaxed to whatever extent they wished for.

[Subaru: Haa.....Rem's amazing.]

[Rem: Yes. But Subaru-kun is lovely too.]

[Subaru: Those two things aren't related.]

[Rem: To me they are. Closely related, that is.]

Unlike Subaru's assessment, apparently to Rem, there was a tight knot connecting trust and Subaru.

He wasn't so sure if he was living up to that assessment. So, "Rem is amazing" was, without a doubt, Subaru's real thoughts, gratitude, and apology.

Rem probably knew that too. —He felt pathetic for that, again.

[Rem: After resting our stomachs for a bit, let's go to the bath-house. You have to rest up in preparation for work.]

[Subaru: But my job starts the day after tomorrow?]

[Rem: I know. So, Subaru-kun has to take it easy tomorrow. —But not tonight.]

With Subaru on her lap, Rem brings her lips near his ears, and she warmly tells him that. The warmth of her voice makes Subaru feel the chills, and his ears turned red.

[Subaru:R—rem, you're amazing.]

[Rem: Yes. Because I'm loved.]

Subaru lets out a whisper, and Rem replied to him while looking embarrassed.

—Although, Subaru didn't notice that Rem's ears were also bright red.

4

—Two days later, Subaru visited Riften Magoji's mansion with an introduction letter.

[Subaru: As expected of the rumored Magoji palace.....it's so huge.]

Subaru, who showed the letter of introduction at the residence's main gate and was let in by the gatekeeper, shows his admiration like that.

A residence in the north side of Banan nicknamed 'Magoji Palace'. Buildings of Wafuu architecture were usually one-story buildings, and Magoji Palace was no exception. The palace conspicuously built on vast land looked just like a Daimyo's mansion that shows up in historical plays.

[Subaru: "Walk to work takes almost an hour. Uniform is covered in your payment".]

Thanks to the letter of introduction, Subaru was hired without problems. He had an interview just in case, but the mistress arranging the servants looked at Subaru and just gave him an OK—the deciding factor was unknown.

In any case, Subaru was employed as a novice choreman, put on the uniform he was given as he felt nervous with the new job and his coworkers he met with for the first time, and he stepped forward towards his workplace.

Magoji Palace was the place, but just like the guidelines said, there were an overwhelming amount of women.

At the very least, Subaru didn't see any men at the place other than the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper wasn't even inside the court, so Subaru truly was the only man at the residence. He couldn't count the amount of female coworkers on his hands and toes, let alone on just his hands. It sure was an imbalanced workplace.

Still, it had nothing to do with what Rem was worrying about. Subaru wasn't trying to do anything to his female co-workers, and most of the women were married.

However, that was if he overlooked the fact that there were other problems constantly coming up.

[???: Natsuki-kuuun! Hey, can you do this for meeee?]

[???: Oh, Subaru-kun, come here! Come ooon, help meee.]

[???: Kyaaa! Subaru-chan, you handsome man! That's it that's it! You sexy guy!]

Then, shrill voices—he was a bit hesitant to call them that, but cheers like those came from all around the palace. They were all cheers coming from Subaru's co-workers that were working at the palace with him.

Even Subaru liked getting attention from men and the opposite sex. He did, but.....

[???: Hahaha, what a nice butt.]

[Subaru: Dohyaa!!]

He gets his butt pat as he passed by—no, he gets his butt rubbed relatively hard, and he shrieked. He immediately turned around as he held onto his butt, but the offender had already disappeared into the direction of the corridor.

Subaru was disgraced while not knowing what to do, and he broke down and wailed his heart out at the wall of the corridor.

[Subaru: I—Impressive sexual harassment.....that's an environment with Osaka grannies for you.....!]

Yes, his face was covered with tears as he cursed his own bad luck of jumping into a place infested with demons.

Subaru's butt was rubbed just now by Osaka old ladies—in Kararagi, they actually had nothing to do with Osaka, but the women were close to that in terms of their nature. Still, he didn't know who the offender was.

All of the women at the Magoji palace were suspects, previous offenders, habitual offenders—Subaru was thrown into a pack of hungry tigers, and sadly, he was nothing more than a shaking bunny.

Since, regardless of the humans and Demi-humans, this workplace was at the mercy of middle-aged women and no one else——!

[Subaru: What is he?! A cougar lover!?!]

[???: That's a pretty close-minded judgement.]

The wall listening to Subaru's complaints answered him...not. A rich, low voice came from behind, and it came from a man that appeared there. And, since it was a man's voice and as it was in the residence, the candidates in the were narrowed down at once. If it wasn't the gatekeeper, then it had to be an intruder——

[Subaru: P—Please! Someone get help!!!]

[???: Unfortunately, you are the only one that can answer. Right now, you are the only one who can save yourself.]

[Subaru: True! But what are the gatekeepers doing.....]

Subaru, without nodding at the just opinion, faces the owner of the voice from the front. It was a thinnish middle-aged man with a mustache and thick eyebrows. He was wearing kimono, which you could tell was made out of high class material at a glance, and an aura of influence emanated from his whole body——he immediately realized who he was.

[Subaru: Could you be...Riften Magoji...-sama?]

[Riften: Correct. I am your employer. Riften Magoji. Now, you don't have to be so respectful. I just came to see the newcomer after finally finishing my work outside.]

The man—Riften calmly nods at Subaru's point as he felt on his moustache. Just earlier, even though he didn't know his identity, he still had acted impolite, and he didn't even mention it. So, he must be a tolerant person.

Thus, Subaru talked about the doubts in his mind, making use of his tolerance.

[Subaru: Master, if I may call you that...I'd like to ask, are you into cougars?]

[Riften: You're pretty direct. However, that's a misunderstanding.]

Subaru's suspicion that the work environment was too reflective of the employer's tastes makes Riften shrug his shoulders as he went, "Good grief". And then, when he took a deep breath,

[Riften: Women are delicate and beautiful. Just touching them makes me feel at ease. That sense of security is irreplaceable, and their open-mindedness gets more charming as they age—don't you think so?]

[Subaru: My butt's been touched close to 1000 times in the past few days!]

[Riften: That's because you have a nice butt.]

[Subaru: You are too biased with your workers!]

[Riften: "Hit it, and you'll hear it". I see, so that's why Mr. Crane gave me the letter of introduction. I understand.]

He was gaining understanding without showing any concern for Subaru. However, Subaru, the main person, was not understanding anything.

[Subaru: Well, regarding the work environment, I've come to the conclusion that Master is a cougar lover.]

[Riften: That's a sad misunderstanding. One day, I'll clear up your misunderstanding and you'll truly understand me.....actually, I'd like to see if you really will stay here until that time comes.]

[Subaru: That's really suggestive. Why do you feel that way?]

[Riften: You think you're the only man I've ever hired at my palace?]

Riften laughed lowly, as if the inside of his throat trembled. When Subaru looked at him, with his appearance he vaguely felt like he looked like an evil Edo-period prefectural governor. As he had that thought,

[Subaru: I just thought that all the men couldn't take the sexual harassment and disappeared.....]

[Riften: Although this is the first time I've heard 'sexual harassment', I can roughly imagine what it means. And let's just say that I won't deny your guess.]

Basically, he was saying that Subaru was chosen as one of the periodic sacrificial scapegoats.

It was already bad enough that the workplace was full of girls, so it would surely be a rough environment for a man with no resistance to sexual harassment. The more one had pride as a man, the more devastating the mark would be.

[Riften: Still, in comparison with all the other men, you're kinda.....tough. I expect good things from you.]

[Subaru: Th—thanks.....]

Once Riffen tapped Subaru's shoulder, he started to leave the corridor, leaving him with doubts. Subaru watches him leave, and he curled his lips as he thought about his employer's eccentric nature.

Perhaps a human needed to sacrifice their human nature in order to become great. Or maybe, since he had senses that were different from others, his results were recognized as unique and he was able to move up in the world.

Subaru touches the shoulder Riffen tapped as he said, "In any case", and sighed.

[Subaru:Even if he has expectations of me, he's only going to be disappointed.]

Subaru's listless whisper reaches no one, and it disappeared into the wooden floor.

[???: Subaru-chaan! Come here for a seeeecond!]

[Subaru: —. Okay! I'm coming now!]

When Subaru heard a yell from afar, he started to run as he changed his expression.

As if to say, "There's no time to stop moving", to his job at this busy mansion and to his coworkers.