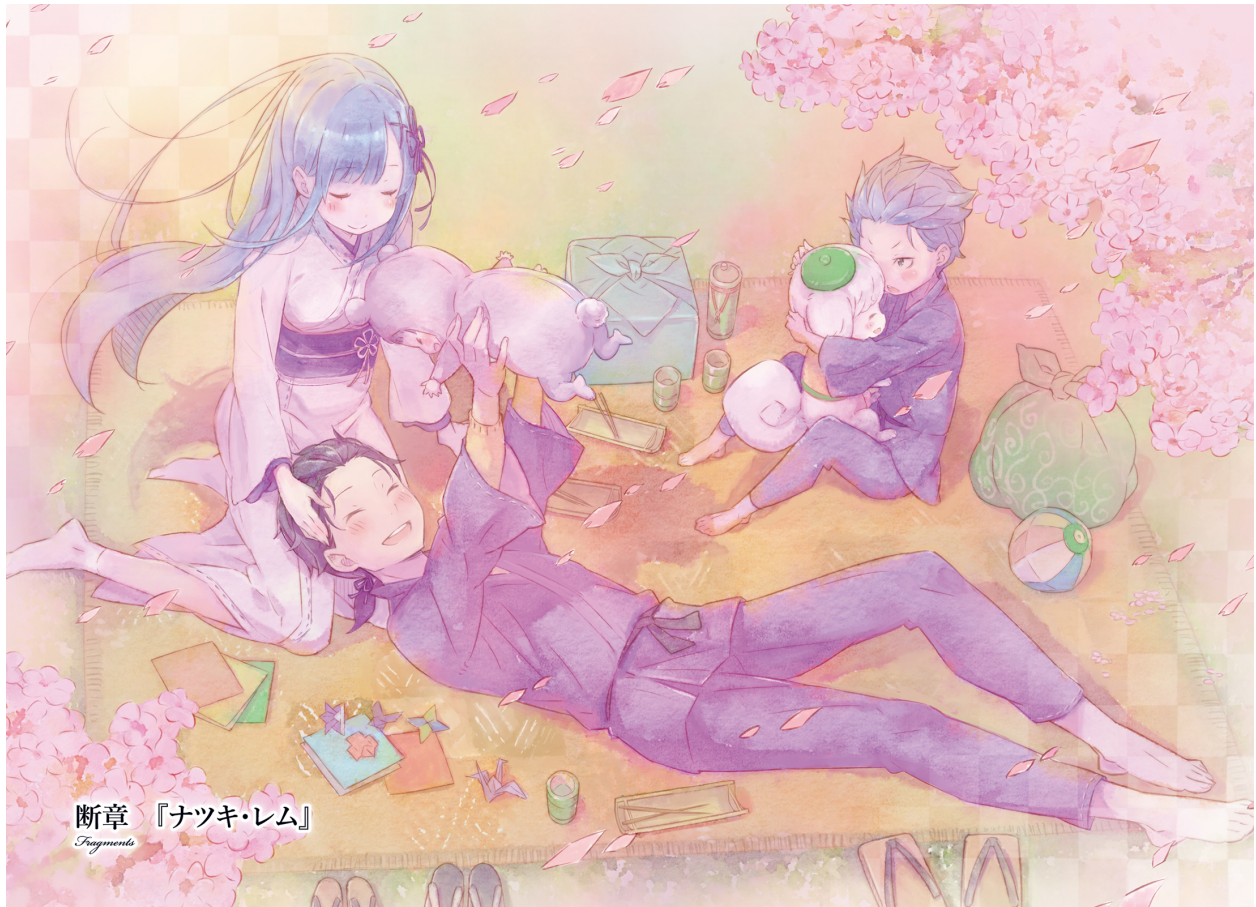


Chapter 3: 3 Months



1

[Halibel: —Still, that really surprised me. My heart almost stopped beating again.]

[Subaru: About that...]

[Rem: We're sorry for troubling you.]

Subaru and Rem were the ones who bowed their heads side by side in the room as it approached dawn. In front of them, it was Halibel who was making them apologize as he nodded calmly.

He puts his hand inside his kimono, moves his eyes while he scratched his chest, and stared at the wall of the room with human made dents and cracks. At the very least, these marks weren't there last night.

[Habliel: What's up with all that?]

[Subaru: They're the result of a ceremony to confirm a married couple being blessed with a new life.....maybe.]

[Rem: I'm sorry. I couldn't control myself very well, I guess because I was so confused.]

Subaru wiped his face with a towel, while Rem hung her head, showing regret.

In short, the dents in the wall were from Subaru crashing into it, and Rem was the one who made that happen. It happened right after she was told that she was pregnant and they shared the joy of being blessed with a child.

[Subaru: Yesterday was the continuance of shocking events. I wanted to make sure that having a child wasn't just a dream, so I asked Rem to hit me a little hard, and then that happened.]

[Rem: *shrug*]

[Halibel:Well, I'm just glad you didn't die because of it. I wouldn't really be able to rest in peace if you did.]

Halibel comments on the married couple's unusual sort of way they talked about their happiness with each other, and he looked away from the wall's dents. After that, he slightly opened one of his slit eyes as he said,

[Halibel: Anyway, let's talk about the cost of repairs for the wall later.....]

[Subaru: Later?]

[Halibel: I have something I need to talk to you about, although it's nothing big.]

Halibel, sitting crossed legged on the tatami mat, started talking as he shook the kiseru in his mouth up and down.

The way he entered the topic sort of made the nervousness from last night return to Subaru. Rem's hit filled with love proved that the tumultuous series of events wasn't just a dream.

In short, all of it wasn't just a dream, including what Halibel did last night.

[Halibel: In short, saying that I'm a "Playboy" as a tenement house manager was just a disguise.]

Halibel confidently made a confession about himself, as if supporting Subaru's thoughts. The first major event that happened in the morning, continuing from last night. There seemed to be a serious light in Halibel's eyes—

[Subaru: Wait, no there isn't. And he isn't even apologetic.]

[Halibel: Why would I need to be apologetic? I didn't do anything wrong, and I also protected you guys.]

After saying that there was more to it, Halibel responded to Subaru like he always would. It was very like him to be aloof and go at his own pace. He just accepted that, since he could even be confusing by suddenly starting to use an authoritative tone, like his personality had changed.

Anyhow, while Subaru fixed the position of Rem's futon blanket cover as she reflected upon herself, he said,

[Subaru: So about why you came out with that revealing, shocking truth.....]

[Rem: Sorry, Halibel-sama. I, uh, kind of figured.]

[Halibel: Whaaat! How embarrassing! If you did, then that's really embarrassing! How embarrassing!]

Subaru's eyes were half-open, while Rem's eyes looked down awkwardly. Listening to their replies, Halibel looks up at the ceiling, and he sighed dramatically as he opened his big mouth and said, "God daaaamn it."

[Subaru: Hold on. You sigh stuff like, "God damn it", but aren't you said to be famous? Actually, I did sort of figure judging from the reactions of people around you, but you didn't even try to hide your name. So, being found out and being troubled are things you brought upon yourself.]

[Rem: I also heard a lot about Halibel-sama "The Great"so I thought you were testing us at first when you said that you were a tenement house manager.]

[Halibel: Ah, so I've been found out since the beginning. Woe is me...]

[Subaru: Woe is not you.]

Subaru just now realizes that he had been left in the dark by the two of them as he made that joke.

How anxious did Rem feel for not telling even Subaru that they had suddenly met Kararagi's strongest on the first day they moved? He was pathetic for being unaware of how much Rem had struggled, despite having peaceful days in this town.

[Subaru: You should've told me. Rem, why did you carry the burden all by yourself?]

[Rem: Subaru-kun.....]

Rem is always like this. She always sacrifices herself more than others. Even though they were living together now, she sacrifices herself for Subaru.

That's why she put the burden on herself until the situation came to light, yet again.

[Rem: I'm sorry. I didn't know Halibel-sama's true motive and.....]

[Subaru: And?]

[Rem: And you're terrible at lying. I didn't want to provoke Halibel-sama since it'd show in your behavior if I carelessly told you about his identity.....]

[Subaru: So you thought very realistically and didn't trust me!]

Subaru gets showered with Rem's sharp words again and again, and so he raises his voice. Seeing Subaru do that, Rem waved her hands in a panic as she said, "Oh, you've got it wrong."

[Rem: I do trust Subaru-kun. Really, words are not enough for me to describe how much I trust you. However, trusting you and making you do something you're incapable of doing are two different matters.]

[Halibel: The more you speak the more I feel bad for Su-san, so let's leave it at that, shall we?]

Rem tells her realistic opinion without hesitation as she put her unlimited love and trust into words.

In actuality, Rem was right to be concerned. Subaru wasn't so sure that he'd interacted with Halibel in the same way after she'd told him about his nickname.

Still, there was something he had to confirm in order for him to be convinced.

[Subaru: This may be a basic question, but is Hal-san really the strongest person in Kararagi? You sure it's not someone else in your family, or a good little twin brother?]

[Rem: About that.....sorry. I'm not completely sure.]

[Halibel: I'm in a bit of an awkward position now that you've apologized for that.]

Rem apologizes in response to Subaru's meaningless point, and it hurt Halibel.

[Halibel: I mean, do you have a problem with me being the strongest or something? Listen, I am the strongest. Or is the the kind of thing where you love the same old me too much, and not the real me?]

[Subaru: It's not something disgusting like that. It's something more idealistic. A strong person should have a strong person's personality, something like that.]

[Halibel: Now you're just insulting me!]

Halibel raised his voice unexpectedly because of Subaru's reasoning. Still, somehow he was Kararagi city-state's strongest—he was the strongest in one of the four large countries.

Of course, he'd like him to have a fitting character. Like how that "Sword Saint" Reinhard van Astra is an overwhelming warrior in the Lugnica kingdom.

[Subaru:Well, I guess that's just me being sentimental.]

[Halibel: It's not like I don't see your point, but this is what I've been doing for a long time. To be honest, I don't care that much about being known as the strongest.....and I don't understand being proud by being strong in a head-on fight and having confidence.]

He skillfully moves the kiseru in his mouth and draws a circle at the tip. Halibel's attitude makes Subaru knit his brows, and he tilted his head as he said, "Being strong in a head-on fight?"

[Halibel: I'm a shinobi warrior. My specialty is attacking around my opponent's weak points. Oh, but the details on how we fight are classified information. It'd endanger our existence. Sorry, we're all mostly dead now, besides me.]

[Subaru: I don't really get your joke on getting wiped out. Also, a 'shinobi'.....]

[Haibel: Oh, people from outside the country might not understand it. As for 'shinobi', it's like 'that'. Like, how could I put this? They're 'that'. It's a job where it'd be bad if I explained 'that' part.]

[Rem: You haven't been specific about anything.....]

Rem mercilessly casts aside Halibel's explanation that lacked the main point. Forgetting about the two of them, Subaru was correctly connecting shinobi with "shinobu" inside of his head—in other words, he connected it with ninja.

He went from being astonished by the existence of wasou and wafuu culture, from katanas to chopsticks, and now finally even ninjas. Because of this, Subaru didn't have trouble understanding it. He didn't, but because of that, Halibel's confession now had a different meaning.

He was obscuring various parts of his confession by joking, but there was some truth in his main point.

—That is, there was going to be some catch after finding out that he was a ninja.

[Subaru: ——]

[Halibel: Su-san, you look pale, are you okay?]

[Subaru: What do you want from us?]

Subaru, cheeks stiffening with caution and nervousness, questioned Halibel, who sat cross-legged. Next to him, Rem also gets affected by the nervousness, and she gripped tight onto the futon blanket cover. Halibel could become a foe or an ally, depending on how he acts next.

And if he turned into their enemy, Subaru would have no chance of winning while holding Rem as she was pregnant.

[Halibel: If, say, in this situation, I said your lives—what would you do?]

[Subaru: I would.....]

[Halibel: ——]

[Subaru: I would make excuses and say that we've been neighbors all this time, Rem and I are newlyweds, she's pregnant, and I'd shamelessly beg for our lives in desperation, appealing to your emotions.....probably.]

[Halibel: I see.]

Subaru's voice and facial expression were truly serious, and that was his reply to Halibel's question. After that, Halibel sighed, and his eyes open just slightly in surprise.

However, Rem, who listened to the same declaration Halibel heard, smiled at Subaru's reply. She reached out for her husband and held onto his free hand as proof of her trust.

Halibel sees the two of them unite like that, and he changed the way he held onto the kiseru with his hands.

And then——

[Halibel: —Wahahaha! S—Su-san's so lame! So uncool! Making that face in front of your wife, "appeal to my emotions".....ahahah!]

[Subaru: You're laughing way too much!]

[Halibel: O—Of course I'd...I'd laugh.....ahh, hah...hah...hah...I'm gonna die of laughter.....! S—So this is what you were trying to do...an ingenious scheme!]

[Subaru: That's groundless, and I did reply seriously.]

[Halibel: I know I know.]

After laughing his ass off, Halibel wiped away the tears he had from laughing too hard. Then, being looked at by Subaru's displeased eyes, the wolf man raises his hands as he said,

[Halibel: Hahh, man that cracked me up. Sorry for laughing. But, you can relax. The hypothetical situation was absolutely hypothetical. After all, even if I really did have a job where I'd get in trouble for getting found out, it would be horrible to act without changing my name.]

[Subaru: T—That's true.]

[Halibel: Besides, it would be too counterproductive of me to get rid of someone I saved. If I was going to do that, I might as well not have bothered saving you yesterday.]

[Subaru: —]

He touches on the attack that happened last night, making Subaru tremble as he remembered the predicament.

In truth, if Halibel hadn't come, Subaru wouldn't be alive right now. The baby inside of Rem wouldn't be alive, either. On top of that, the baby would have been lost without them ever finding out about its existence—

[Subaru: I'm really sorry for saying this so late. Hal-san.....Halibel-san, thanks a lot for yesterday. You are lifesaver. You saved me, Rem, and the baby inside of her.]

[Rem: Please let me thank you too. Thanks to you, we didn't end up losing our, erm, child. Thank you very much.]

[Halibel: Woow, how sincere. I'll gratefully accept your thanks since it makes me happy, though.]

Seeing Subaru and Rem quickly bow their heads, Halibel cheerfully smiled. However, after that, while still having a smile on his face, he pointed the kiseru in his hand at Subaru as he said,

[Halibel: Okay, I accept your thanks. Still, you gotta quit it with that discomforting speech. It's really embarrassing for Su-san to call me Halibel-san at this point. Rem-chan you too. If you could stop with the 'Halibel-sama' stuff now and be more informal with me, that'd make me happy.]

[Subaru:Yeah, got it. Thanks, Hal-san.]

[Rem: I'll see what I can do, Halibel-sama.]

[Halibel: Your wife sure is stubborn!]

Halibel raises his hands to surrender to Rem, who stubbornly insisted on keeping the honorific. Then, Halibel lit the kiseru that he held with his raised hands, and he put it in his mouth. He then smokes it.

Once Subaru saw the rising smoke, he made a sour look.

[Subaru: Hal-san. Tobacco can harm a pregnant woman's body, so from now on, smoking is forbidden in this house.]

[Halibel: Ohh, don't worry about it. Mine has no tobacco, unlike a normal kiseru. Mine is like medicine. It's used by shinobis.]

[Rem: Medicine, you say?]

[Halibel: Yes. If I don't smoke this regularly, I'll die. Hahh, and then we'd all be wiped out.]

[Subaru: There you go again with jokes on getting wiped out.....!]

His excuse sounded like a joke, but the wafting smell of the smoke made Subaru think otherwise. The smell of the smoke Halibel put out certainly was different from what you'd call tobacco, although Subaru wasn't very knowledgeable about it. It did not have the smell of tobacco, but the smell of medicine—but it's not like that'd be good for a mother's body, either.

[Subaru: Anyway, refrain from doing it when Rem's here. If there's ever a time when you're torn between decisions, you could help our child out by bravely dying out.]

[Halibel: You just said that I'm a lifesaver though!]

[Subaru: Being a lifesaver and being a smoker are two different matters. Go do it by the window.]

Halibel gets sent from the middle of the tatami mat to the side, and he gives out smoke out the window while being sulky. And then, with his slit eyes, he looked at Subaru, who protected his wife and child, and said,

[Halibel: Putting the matter of the child aside as something to be handled by the husband and wife.....let's talk a little more about last night, shall we.]

[Subaru: Mm, alright.]

[Halibel: So, first I want you tell me about that person from last night. Do you have any idea who that girl is?]

[Subaru: ——]

He starts talking about last night, and Subaru hesitates to answer his question about knowing who the culprit is.

He'd never seen that woman with a blade-like presence before. They truly weren't acquaintances. Still, it wasn't like he had no idea why she'd attack them.

The woman was clearly going after Subaru and Rem. This wasn't like something where they were unluckily dragged into an indiscriminate attack, since they were attacked not once, but twice, and she chased them all the way to the tenement house.

There could only be one reason as to why they were being chased someone with such bloodlust—it had to be because Subaru and Rem were living alone together.

[Subaru: Wi.....]

[Halibel: Wi?]

Subaru moves his stiff cheeks and his lips, and he tries to touch on who she might be. However, the fear Subaru should've forgotten about returns, and it continued to tear his mind apart as he tried to open the cover to his memory.

—Actually, he didn't forget it. He had never forgotten about it.

The fear was still coiled around Natsuki Subaru as the chains of regret.

[Subaru: ——]

Even the two letters of the words he tried to speak were unbearable for his tongue.

Seeing Subaru act like that, Halibel impatiently played with his whiskers with his fingers. And then,

[Rem: —Subaru-kun, last night's culprit isn't who you think it is.]

[Subaru: Rem?]

[Rem: I know what you were feeling and what you were thinking just now. And I don't think you're right.....yes, that's what I'll say.]

There was an unexpected difference in their opinions. Subaru instead opened his eyes wide at Rem, who made that statement. She nods at Subaru, and Halibel gave him a serious look.

He takes that look head on, and Halibel slightly opened one of his eyes as he said,

[Halibel: You shouldn't lie to take care of Su-san. I know this doesn't sound convincing coming from someone who calls himself a playboy, but we aren't playing around here. This is a life-threatening matter.]

[Rem: I'm not lying. I.....I have the nose to sniff out that enemy. I couldn't sense it in the person from last night. So, the culprit is not related to what he thinks.]

[Halibel: —. How reliable is your nose?]

[Rem: I'm able to be with Subaru-kun right now because of my nose.]

Those words did not justify anything. Still, they were declared so confidently that it didn't feel that way. As a result, Halibel's reacted a little late.

Meanwhile, Rem brought Subaru's arms towards her, and she hugged them firmly.

[Rem: Here's proof.]

[Halibel: Su-san and Rem-chan sure are quite the.....troubling neighbors.]

[Subaru:Says the guy who hid his identity.]

[Halibel: I wasn't able to hide it, though. But, you got a point. Then I guess we're neighbors in the same boat. We're friends at this tenement house, so let's get along and work together.]

Halibel suddenly smiles, and he faced the two people who were close to each other as he suggested to work together. His words surprise Subaru, and then Rem and him look at each other. They didn't understand his true motive.

Kararagi's strongest was going to help them in this situation where they had no allies and were being targeted by an enemy of unknown affiliation. It was a charming proposal, but he still wanted to know Halibel's intentions before jumping at it.

What did he have to gain from supporting Subaru and Rem in this situation?

[Subaru: I don't get why you'd help us out so much.....]

[Halibel: Don't stress over complicated things. Elder asked me to take care of you guys, and plus you have no friends. Fussing over pros and cons is a part of Kararagi, however losing friends is an extraordinarily heavy loss. Isn't it just natural for me to act so that I don't lose any?]

Halibel says that, and he makes a gesture that looked like a wink as he normally would. He wasn't completely sure if it was a wink because both of his eyes were always squinted like slit eyes.

Everything about his behavior lacks seriousness, and so it didn't feel like there was an ulterior motive behind him doing it. Everything about Halibel's character is aloof, and that makes him who he is.

That's exactly why he believed him and why he didn't think he was just telling a lie he'd like to hear.

[Subaru: I understand. Thanks a lot for saying that. We're going to rely on you so much.]

[Halibel: Yep, depend on me as much as you want. Once you become parents, you won't be able to whine with the child there anyway. Now's the time to depend on me before that happens.]

Subaru felt temporarily relief, saved by his generous response. Once Halibel nodded at Subaru, who was finally relieved, he continued by saying, “Still.”

[Halibel: We have no idea who the culprit is — that’s our biggest problem.]

[Subaru: About that, how about you make around 1000 clones and overpower her by sheer force of numbers?]

[Halibel: You truly are going to depend on me a lot, huh.....Also, cloning is pretty much my trump card. I can’t just use it recklessly. 1000 clones is impossible, and I’m bluffing pretty hard when I’m four.]

[Subaru: How about your sense of smell as a wolf? Maybe you can go after the culprit’s smell or something with that.]

[Halibel: About thaaat, I did try it.]

Halibel snorted at Subaru, who had his clone tactic rejected and suggested an alternate plan. As he moved around his black nose and sniffed he said,

[Halibel: How strange. I can’t smell that girl’s scent anymore. If you want to escape my nose, you have to get rid of your scent pretty carefully.....I guess she’s just that skilled.]

[Subaru: This mean she’s taken countermeasures against Hal-san.]

In this situation, what’s terrifying is that woman’s meticulous planning.

In regards to the sequence of events of last night, Halibel becoming Subaru and Rem’s ally was still unconfirmed information. However, the woman perfectly prepared for that uncertain factor, and she attacked.

A night attack after people were cleared from the street, and a surprise attack where she came after him at the tenement house—in a way, both of these attacks weren't matching in meticulousness, especially in the latter event where they exchanged some words to a certain extent.

[Halibel: Basically, right now we'll just have to wait and see. No unnecessary sacrifices will be made this way, although I did talk about this with the town's policeman just in case. It'd be problematic if the town became covered in bodies after picking a fight carelessly.]

[Subaru: It makes sense to clear out people. You think they'll find her?]

[Rem: You shouldn't expect much, I think. I should just take the initiative and act.]

[Subaru: You absolutely mustn't do that.]

Subaru rejected Rem's frail opinion with powerful words. Although there still weren't any changes showing in her appearance, Rem was pregnant. He wasn't going to allow her to overwork herself. He even wanted to make her take a break from her job at Temple Elementary School and rest at the house.

Then, Subaru suddenly had a realization.

[Subaru:Crap. What am I going to do about work?]

[Rem: I have to go to Temple Elementary School too.]

Subaru and Rem, who were focused on the conversation, notice that it's right around the time to leave for work, and their faces became pale.

This was a critical moment for Subaru if he wanted to keep his job, and of course, it also was for Rem, who was a fulltime worker. Absences from work without notice were inexcusable; ICD — inform, contact, discuss — is essential for a working adult.

[Halibel: Ahh, should you really be worry about that right now?]

[Subaru: Don't be stupid. Don't lump me with you when you have unearned income. Were going to eat, whether or not there is an enemy. Money is needed in order for us to eat. We aren't going to miss anything in our daily life.]

Subaru talked back to Halibel, who acted shocked, and he continued with a, "Besides."

[Subaru: This is frustrating. It's so outrageous how this keeps messing with the flow of our lives even though it's all her fault. I'm not just going to sit back and let this happen.]

[Halibel: ——]

Their daily lives were still waiting after the reasonable attacks by the enemy and repelling danger. Subaru and the others had lives to live even after their eventful story.

Therefore, he absolutely couldn't stand breaking down what they'd built up.

[Subaru: Plus, we have a tight family budget.]

[Rem: And we're going to have one more member, so we need to save up.]

[Halibel: What kind of threat is this!? You two truly are a ridiculous married couple.]

They used their lives and their new life as an excuse, and Halibel went into deep thought with a troubled look. The two of them were firmly determined. Understanding that, Halibel let out a deep sigh with his big mouth.

[Halibel: The enemy probably won't attack today or tomorrow for now.]

[Subaru: What makes you say that?]

[Halibel: She took countermeasures while considering my nose, right? I came to this conclusion because I don't think that she'd rush it and make a mistake.]

[Rem: I think he has a point.]

Rem also agreed with Halibel, who raised a finger. Subaru was convinced too as he said, "I see."

They were thinking that the enemy wouldn't do anything without enough preparation, precisely because she is smart. You could say that they trusted her meticulous style, although it wasn't very fitting for someone who'd hurt him so much.

As long as they followed the twisted trust that came from the right track—

[Halibel: I'll stay with Rem-chan for today. That way, Su-san can also relax, and the doctor from yesterday can come too once it becomes fire time¹.]

[Subaru:Got it. I'll go to the palace and talk with Riften-san and the landlady. I'll tell Temple Elementary School that Rem will be taking a day off, too.]

¹ In Re:zero's world, this means the latter 6 bright hours of the day. Basically noon to 6pm

[Rem:Yes. It's unfortunate, but please do.]

Although Rem seemed bummed out, she nodded in agreement with Subaru's plan without opposing it.

As for Subaru's job, he had no choice but to reveal the situation and wait for Riffen and the landlady's decision. It was depressing how the hinted path to being promoted to a full-time employee was undoubtedly far away, though.

However, once Rem moved forward in stages of pregnancy, she'd no longer be able to work at Temple Elementary School without being hindered by the enemy. That alone was a sure fact.

[Rem: Please let me continue for as long as possible, Subaru-kun.]

[Subaru:We'll have to have a good talk about that, too.]

[Rem: Okay]

It was now Subaru's turn to support Rem, as she was dealing with two problems — her job, and pregnancy. So that no other agonizing things would torment Rem's heart, even if they were justifiable.

[Subaru: Alright, although it's extremely hard for me to do this.....I think...I'm gonna...go to work.....!]

[Halibel: You should just quit if it's so hard for you.]

[Subaru: Don't just say that so casually, undeserving noble. I'm going to be 'that', you know. From now on, I'm going to be the provider of my family.]

He says that and somehow stands up after almost getting smashed by the weight of being a provider.

That...that's right. Rem has a baby. Subaru's going to be a father.

He's going to become the provider in order to protect this place called the Natsuki home.

—These were the thoughts weighing very very heavily on Subaru.

[Rem: Take care, Subaru-kun. I'll be waiting for you to come back home.]

[Subaru: —Yep, I'm off now.]

Rem, smiling slightly, gently relieves the pressure and reluctance Subaru had, and she sees him off. After that, Subaru took a deep breath, and then he goes towards the tenement house exit. He put his hand on the door, and he finally turned around.

[Subaru: Hal-san, please take care of Rem, seriously. If something happens, please sacrifice yourself.]

[Halibel: I never had a talent for dodging attacks, mind you.]

He waves, makes sure Halibel promised him, and he left.

The wind was cold, and the rising morning sun was slowly starting to brightly shine on the town of Banan.

[Subaru: So bright.]

He probably thought that the morning sun was brighter than usual because of his current state of mind.

While thinking that way, Subaru started walking towards his workplace to fulfill his duty.

2

—The turmoil that continued from last night — this series of events shocked Subaru significantly.

It was hinted that he'd be promoted to a full-time employee at his workplace, and then his life was threatened by an unfamiliar enemy on the streets at night. Once he got home, he was nearly killed by the enemy that followed him, and lastly, Rem's pregnancy was revealed.

Honestly, the good and bad major events were too much for a single day. He even wanted to complain.

Still, there were plenty of happy realizations that happened because of the major events continuing.

—First and foremost, there was celebrating Rem being pregnant. That was a huge deal.

As usual with many men, the shock from unexpectedly finding out one's partner is pregnant is immeasurable. Subaru also was so shocked that he couldn't even tell that his surprise was surprise.

However, after the first wave of shock subsided, pure joy as well as gratitude towards Rem were left in Subaru's mind, so he was happy about it himself.

Children should be loved by their parents and born with joy and blessings.

Even though Subaru knew that this rule didn't apply to all children, he wanted to believe in the ideal. Or at least, Subaru was raised in such a way that made him believe in it.

That's why he wanted to love his child. He believed that being loved brings happiness.

That being said, always being worried about not being prepared enough is an entirely different matter.

—And then there was the second realization; they realized they were blessed with the people around them.

First of all, they were able to settle down in Banan town thanks to the connection they made with the person they had met on their journey. News got around, they made connections with Halibel, and then that led to them escaping death by the skin of their teeth last night as well as his help this morning.

And then he even realized it in Temple Elementary School when he came to tell them that Rem would be absent from work.

[???: —Pregnant! Really! Wow, that's great!]

Subaru was blessed so much by the Temple Elementary School staff that he was the one who behaved modestly.

Frankly, it was a personal affair of a newcomer. He prepared himself for insults like, "The new female teacher doesn't know how to responsibly separate her private life from her job!" but it wasn't anything to worry about.

Another teacher covered for her absence, and he was told that a higher-up would talk about what would happen from here on out. He did nothing but

thank them. In an unexpected way, he found out about his wife's popularity at her workplace, and it made him proud as a husband.

That's how things didn't go as he expected in a good way, and then Subaru went to his own workplace.

He had to tell his employer Riften and the landlady superior about the situation and discuss what they'd do from here on out. Of course, this was a personal issue. Subaru was planning on discussing it when the opportunity came.

He was going to, but—

[???: —Subaru-chan, your wife is pregnant?]

All his enthusiasm went to waste, as it seemed they'd already heard about it from someone somewhere. For some reason, in the palace it was already well known that Rem was pregnant, seeing how he was plied with questions at once.

His memory on what happened after that wasn't very clear, but it did end with a warm conclusion of, "Ooh, Subaru-chan may have a childish look, but I guess he really does get some, too."

After that, he did have another opportunity to have a discussion with Riften.

[Riften: I heard about your situation. That's a pretty tough spot to be in.]

[Subaru: Y—Yes.....sorry. I've troubled Master with my private life.....]

[Riften: What? I don't think it's a bother or anything. A new life means the birth of a new client.]

[Subaru: You are so open-minded.]

He reveals the situation to Riffen in the tearoom, and the way he accepted it dumbfounded him, rather than surprised him.

Seeing Subaru react like that, Riffen continued speaking as he said, "Also."

[Riffen: I heard about what happened last night from Mr. Halibel. If there's anything on your mind, feel free to talk about it. The ladies and I will listen to what you have to say.]

[Subaru: Well.....I, uh, appreciate it. However, why are you doing this?]

[Riffen: Why am I being so nice? I told you, I have high hopes for you. I invested the asset hope in you. Of course I'd try everything so that I could recover my shares.]

Subaru's extremely understanding workplace and his employer's powerful words were starting to move him to tears. However, it was too pathetic of him to look like that. He was being spoiled too much.

[Riffen: I'm sure that the ladies will respond nicely, too. That's the trust you cultivated.]

[Subaru:It's only been about two weeks.]

[Riffen: Two valuable weeks, that is. That's all there is to it.]

He basically tells Subaru that it's no big deal, and now was the time when he had to look up.

Everyone at the Magoji palace became true lifesavers to Subaru in this moment.

He was fortunately blessed with lifesavers, neighbors, and with people at his workplace.

The tumultuous day let him know that he was blessed with many things, including a child.

—All the more reason for the mysterious woman to cast a shadow on his happiness.

For Subaru and Rem, the enemy was too unpredictable. They had no clue as to why they were being targeted, ‘according to Rem’. Still, that beautiful, cruel killer would definitely show up again.

Even with Halibel, the one renowned the strongest of Kararagi, they couldn’t achieve relief easily.

And so, Subaru quickly left home and hurried on home, depending on the kindness of everyone at the palace. He’d return the favor, no matter what. So, he’d depend on them, just for now.

Connections helped him out with one urgent matter. Subaru didn’t have any bright ideas for the remaining problem—for countermeasures against the woman, but with Halibel, someone who was familiar with the town, and Rem, who had extensive knowledge, perhaps they would come up with a solution.

While having hopes like that inside, Subaru ran through the street and—

[???: —You look like a fool walking around all alone. Are you even trying to protect your woman?]

—Right in the middle of the street, he was convinced that Halibel was quite off with his foresight.

3

[???: What are you playing dumb for? Look, can you take your eyes off of me?]

The woman showed up in front of Subaru in an extremely unashamed way, like it was no big surprise.

He was in town in the middle of going back from the Magoji Palace to the tenement house. He managed to leave work early in the afternoon thanks to the people around him being considerate, and so it was currently in the afternoon with the sun high up—that was obvious. However, there were surging crowds walking past each other, and they were practically sticking out like sore thumbs.

In fact, the woman's brutish beautiful face charmed people, and it wasn't suitable for spying at all, for better or worse. If she had the same objective as last night, then perhaps the street being unclear was some sort of blunder by her.

Or maybe she was going to attack him despite all the attention.

[Subaru: ———]

Subaru muffles his voice and looks at the street. Nobody could tell that this woman, who was standing in the middle of the street as if she owned it, was a dangerous person. If she attacked with as much force as she did last night, many people would get harmed—especially if the attack was as vicious as her first one was. He could not imagine the amount of damage it'd cause.

[Subaru: I messed up.....I thought you were cautious.]

Clear out people, prepare for the enemy, and find out where he ran. He was inclined to believe that she wanted to secretly accomplish her objective and was going to at least carry out those things cautiously.

This was the result. She had the whole town hostage, and he couldn't act.

[Subaru: How cruel it is for you to be such a sharp woman.]

[???: Huh? You sure can be rude out of nowhere. How could you greet someone like that?]

[Subaru: Everyone around are hostages, and if I run away, you will show no mercy. That's your plan, isn't it?]

The woman squints, her eyes were cold, and she had on the same white clothes from last night. The well-dressed woman's Wasou being pure white without a single stain—although that wasn't a very rare sight—and her beautiful face being eccentric created this ethereal sort of harmony.

That's what he'd think if Subaru never found out that this silent person standing, looking like a painting God drew, was actually a sadist who hurt him and made him suffer.

[???: Well, whatever. We can talk for a little while we walk.]

[Subaru: What?]

[???: It's too noisy here, and we're going to the same place anyway. You do know that you aren't in a position to refuse, don't you?]

Jerking her chin, the woman overbearingly tells him to walk with her. The people around were being held hostage. It was frustrating, but he had no choice but to do what she told him.

If only she hadn't said those unforgivable words.

[Subaru: You're going to the same place.....which means...no way, you bastard.]

[???: The home you and your woman live in. Some mutt is taking care of her right now, right? That's why you're here. If its owner is here, wouldn't you feel more at ease if he had a collar?]

[Subaru: Don't be ridiculous! Why would I let...as if I'd let you come with me! I won't let a dangerous woman like you see Rem.....]

[???: —Shut up.]

[Subaru: —]

The woman grumpily says those two words to Subaru, who firmly denied her request.

Hearing the sharpness of her tone, Subaru feels an illusionary knife stab his throat, silencing him.

His blood was freezing because of the woman's sharpened hostility. It was the pressure from last night that very well might make one fall to their knees, practically disgracing themselves.

However—

[Subaru:Like hell anyone would let you see Rem.]

[???: Wow. I'm kind of impressed. I thought you were gonna be a coward and freeze up.]

The woman's slit eyes widen, and she said that to Subaru, who opposed her as he bit his lip. After that, she pointed a finger at Subaru, whose face turned red from anger and agitation, and said,

[???: Still, I won't listen to you. And besides, you've got it all wrong.]

[Subaru: I've got it all wrong?]

[???: I'm not trying to kill you guys. Not right now, that is.]

The woman shrugged her shoulders as she opened the hand she pointed at him, waving it. She had calm actions and calm behavior, however this was the same way she acted last night when she beat up Subaru.

This woman is capable of beating Subaru to death while smiling, after all.

[Subaru:How can I believe you?]

[???: I'm capable of killing anyone I want to kill. When I thought to kill you yesterday, I had plenty of time to do so. And yet, I didn't kill you. So, I have no intention of killing you.]

That was some poor logic for proof. And yet, it had undeniable weight.

It was the sort of truth that was pride and a fact, and you could only call it a self-evident truth.

The woman was an enemy. She had both hostility and bloodlust. However, she left without taking Subaru and Rem's lives, showed up the next day, and told him that he was headed towards their home—.

[Subaru: I have no idea what you're thinking.]

[???: You want me to tell you right away...What are you, a baby? Doesn't your female partner have a baby? If you're gonna to be a parent, how about you be a little more independent and use that noggin of yours?]

[Subaru: Seeing as you've changed after overnight, are you taking me to the tenement house to apologize or something?]

[???: Hah, that's rich. It's a good thing I'm not planning on killing you, huh.]

The woman scoffs at Subaru, and she starts to walk with her back turned on him. She didn't speak, but her shaking milky white hair was silently pressuring him to come with her.

Even if he resisted now, the woman would still head towards the tenement house. The town was also being held hostage.

[Subaru: How do you know Rem is pregnant?]

[???: Because I could tell by looking, obviously. Can you not assume that I'm similar to a slow male like you?]

[Subaru: Rem didn't notice, either.]

[???: Okay, then can you not assume that I'm similar to slow males and females like you guys?]

The woman dutifully corrects herself and walks through the town with Subaru while humming. It was unfamiliar, messy humming that didn't have a melody or anything really, but something about it sounded nostalgic.

That being said, Subaru didn't stop being cautious of the woman one bit, and he kept thinking about how he'd have no way to tell the two in the tenement house if she ever let her guard down.

Still, coming up with a dramatic idea in the mere 15 minutes it'd take to get there was highly unlikely—

[Halibel: —I did feel like your smell was coming back awfully quickly.]

Halibel, who was lighting his kiseru in front of the tenement house, let that statement out.

He came out to the front for a smoke break, and he happened to meet Subaru and the woman once they arrived. When Halibel stared at the two of them with imperceivable emotions in his slit eyes, he said,

[Halibel: The day after you discover your wife's pregnant, you bring back another beautiful woman. What's that say about you as a man?]

[???: I think it means he's the worst, what do you think?]

[Halibel: I'll have to agree that he is on the outside. But this isn't the time to be joking around.]

[???: Hmm...]

Halibel, who took smoke into his lungs and breathed it out from his nose, ponders something. Then, he slowly stands up, and he looked at the women as he cleaned off his butt.

[???: Can you not get cocky just because you're huge?]

[Halibel: Now that's a new false accusation. You're such a beautiful woman, so you could at least let me win in height.]

[???: One who enjoys being praised by a mutt is merely a mutt of a woman.]

There was no way to get along with this woman. The woman's stern reply didn't bring down Halibel, but as for Subaru, he was worried about this grim situation and Rem—who would have to get involved eventually.

[Subaru: Halibel, where's Rem?]

[Halibel: I'm surprised you asked in this situation.She's inside. She wouldn't listen when I told her to at least let me do the housework. I gave in.]

[Subaru: Sounds like Rem.]

Although she was pregnant, you could actually say that she was still in the early stages of pregnancy. Since her stomach didn't look all that different, at this point housework shouldn't be that much of a burden on her, although this was just Subaru's guess he made based off the little knowledge he had in health and physical education.

The woman next to him was 100 times more likely to be a burden.

[Halibel: So, really, who is that girl? She does have quite the foul mouth, but is she a friend of yours?]

[Subaru: No, you must know who she is.She's the woman who attacked us yesterday.]

[Halibel: HUUUUH?]

Subaru was disappointed by Halibel's poor guessing ability as he thought about how slow he was to get it. He thought that he was having a pointless conversation to kill time, but apparently that was not the case.

However, Halibel had an odd look after Subaru made that point, and he said,

[Halibel: She's...the girl from yesterday? But wait.....]

[???: What? Are you trying to say that it's a lie? Are you trying to say that I don't look like someone who'd do something like that? Can you not make me laugh? I threw this guy all over the room, beat him to a bloody pulp.....wait! Come to think of it, yesterday you disgusted me with all that sweat you were covered in! What are you going to do to make up for that!?!]

[Subaru: Nothing! My body is shaky as hell now, be satisfied with that.]

The woman interrupts Halibel, and in the middle of talking, she heats up with anger as last night came to her mind. Seeing that unreasonable behavior, which was like an outburst of anger, Subaru tries to appease her rage by reasoning that he could still feel the pain from the bruises on his body.

And then, once this ruckus suddenly began in front of the tenement house, it happened.

[Rem: —I'd like to talk.]

The tenement house door opened, and the one who step foot into a dangerous situation was a blue-haired girl—it was Rem. Rem finished up the housework, and when she loosened the tied sleeves of her kimono, she smiled at Subaru.

[Rem: Welcome home, Subaru-kun. You're quite early today. You really wanted to see me that badly?]

[Subaru:Yeah, I sure did. To be honest, it hurts when I'm not with you, even if it's only for one moment.]

[Rem: W—Well.....yes, erm, I feel the same way. Oh no, now I'm blushing.]

[???: Can you not!?!]

The married couple's innocent exchange make the woman's displeasure explode in a different way. The woman pulls her own short hair out as she said,

[???: Sheesh, this is just wrong.....]

[Rem: I'm sorry about that. How about we go inside and cool down first? I'll make some tea, so please come on in.]

[???: ——]

The woman was probably trying to say something you would never expect to hear from her.

The women looked stupefied. Subaru and Halibel also exchange looks. Seeing their three reactions, Rem tilts her head, and while softly making a happy look, she said,

[Rem: You shouldn't startle the baby. Let's have a good talk.]

So, she most definitely had mouthed, "The mother is strong."

4

[Tia: My name is.....ahh, it's Tia. Call me that for now.]

The woman—Tia, who was let into the room and sunk onto the tatami mat, named herself in an discomfoting way.

In front of Tia, Subaru and Rem were sitting next to each other, and Halibel was standing and leaning against a wall near the entrance. It was almost like a stressful interview in a meeting hall, but you couldn't necessarily blame them once you considered the tension covering the room.

In fact, something like a stressful interview or a defense was about to begin—it was a scene to get to the bottom of Tia's objective, as she went out of her way to come back to the tenement house.

[Subaru: I really hope this isn't the sort of thing where the culprit comes back to the scene of the crime just to double check things...]

It's possible that she named herself to further her relationship with them. Rem places the tea in front of Tia, perhaps in response to her compromise, and when she quickly bowed, she said,

[Rem: I'm Rem. Next to me is Subaru-kun, my husband. The one at the wall is Halibel-sama, who lives in the next room. Pleased to meet you, Tia-sama.]

[Tia: Subaru-kun and Halibel-sama?]

[Subaru: Just “Subaru” and “Halibel” is fine. Anyway, Rem, you don’t need to say this girl’s name with a “-sama” honorific. She’s like.....like an enemy.]

Tia was practically treated like a guest, but she was still someone who should clearly be classified as an enemy. Subaru was the one who insisted on that, but Rem shook her head as she said,

[Rem: I have to. Since Tia-sama has been invited, she’s a guest. And you’re treating someone who just came to talk poorly. She came here because she had something to talk about. Isn’t that right, Tia-sama?]

[Tia: Humph, I think I like you a little more than that male. Rem, was it? I’ll keep that in mind. As for the male and the mutt, they’re a no-go.]

Tia, being in a better mood because of Rem treating her politely, took a sip of her tea. She choked.

[Tia: Ouch! So hot! It’s so hot.]

[Rem: Oh, I’m sorry. Are you okay?]

[Tia: I—I’m impressed. I let my guard down, and then this happens. You’re a tough one.]

[Subaru: You just inflicted pain on yourself. Quit it, otherwise this conversation will go nowhere.]

With his hand, Subaru stopped Rem from apologizing to Tia, who wrongly resented her as she displayed her inability to take in hot things.

It seemed like he'd misread Tia's character, as she's been having listless interactions. However, Subaru would never let his guard down. He was staying alert for when she'd strike like she did last night.

[Tia: The male seems to have a sickness of becoming tense and pointlessly marking his territory. Whatever. I'll finish this business quickly, just like you want. I don't have much time, either. In fact, I'm very busy.]

[Subaru: Business.....]

[Tia: Like I SAID, I didn't come here to kill you. —That does depend on you guys, though.]

At the end of Tia's statement, her voice turned cold, and once she put down her teacup, she looked at the front with her sharp eyes.

And then—

[Tia: For mercy's sake, I'll assume you did it on the spur of the moment. So, don't worry about the whole retribution thing. Give back the light ball instead.]

She declared that as she stared at Subaru—no, she stared at Rem.

That was the first thing that confused Subaru. Tia's eyes fell on Rem and she literally thought nothing of people like Subaru who were right next to her. The next thing that confused him was the "light ball" Tia talked about, as he had no idea what that was. It seemed Rem didn't either, as she said,

[Rem: light ball.....?]

She tilts her head, and a question mark appeared. However, Tia wasn't happy with that answer.

[Tia: Respond carefully. “Yes” is the only answer I want to hear. A wrong answer will cost you parts of your body.]

Tia tells that to Rem as she stuck her hand out in front of her and pointed at her with a white finger.

Her quiet voice sounded calm, but it was fake. There was anger hidden within her tone, and it was just counting to the time when it'd blow up.

Tia directs her anger at Rem by saying that her answer would affect the outcome, and she meant it. In this coercive negotiation, it was as if she was saying that people like Halibel wouldn't be able to deter her—

[Subaru: H—Hold on.]

[Tia: No. Choose your words wisely, and that goes for you too, not just Rem. Make one wrong move, and your female partner's fingers won't suffice.]

[Subaru: What are you, a devil? Whatever, doesn't matter, just listen. What is this light ball?]

[Tia: Playing innocent, huh. It's what you guys stole. I don't know what you call it, but it's my light ball. I came to get it back.]

[Subaru: What the hell is that.....]

Subaru's answer makes Tia's mood worsen even more. But no matter how much anger she had inside, Subaru would not give her the answer she wanted.

This is because Subaru truly had no idea what the “light ball” was, and of course, neither did Rem.

Even though she said they stole it, it was a bolt from the blue. Even if she ranted about it, they couldn’t imagine how what kind of object it was or how important it was to Tia.

But—

[Tia: I warned you. Choose your words wisely. You failed to do that.]

[———]

A wind blows by, going between Subaru and Rem, and it created a sharp mark on the wall in the back.

Sharp cracks were vertically cut into the tenement house wall, as if it had been showered with slashes. The sharpness was so fierce that, had the target been a person instead of a wall, it could’ve easily torn them in half.

A kind of threat and warning. By using force, Tia demonstrated that they wouldn’t get off next time.

[Halibel: ——]

Halibel, watching in the back, couldn’t move. Perhaps he had no chance to move because he didn’t see the demonstration coming, which wasn’t done to hit them. He wasn’t sure.

In any case, for Subaru and Rem, this demonstrated that it was a force to be reckoned with. Afterwards, Tia posed the same question to Rem.

Which was—

[Tia: —Where is the light ball? Give it back.]

[Rem:I'm terribly sorry. My answer is the same as Subaru-kun's.]

[Tia: ——]

[Rem: I can't return something I don't know about.]

[Tia: I see.]

Rem answered firmly as she stared straight at Tia. Hearing Rem's answer, Tia closes her eyes, and then she moved a finger on her right hand that she held out.

The wind blew. This time it intensely blew off the room's fusuma², splitting it into two.

[Tia: Are you still not going tell me?]

[Rem: It's not that I can't tell you about it. I have no clue what it is.]

[Tia: You sure are stubborn!]

Tia's anger towards Rem. who still stood her ground, finally explodes. Tia stands up, and she stuck her hands out left and right. The next moment, the terrifying wind devastates the room, and the room is cut up by kamaitach³i. Destruction demolishes the room.

² Japanese sliding door

³ Cut made from a whirlwind. Japanese folklore monster <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamaitachi> ...one of Genji's quotes

The wall, the fusuma, the shelves, the tatami mat, the tea table — everything gets destroyed, falling down in the room. Subaru was stiff and holding his breath, as the waves of the raging wind fell all over him.

However, Rem didn't avert her eyes, and she didn't run away in fear.

[Tia: Gr.....rrr.....!]

Tia no longer had a main target for destruction in the room, and she finally roared. She looks at Rem, then Subaru, and then Halibel, and then she said,

[Tia: I—I'm going to kill that mutt. Are you still not going to give it back?]

[Rem: Nope, I can't.]

[Halibel: I mean, there's kinda no other choice with how the conversation's going, but aren't you treating me too poorly here?]

Rem's strong will stubbornly pushes aside Tia's desperate threat. Now that it's turned out like this, even if Tia were to cruelly kill Halibel, her wish wouldn't be granted.

[Tia: Well, I guess it'll help my mood just a little bit.]

[Halibel: Su-san, may I cry?]

[Subaru: I feel you. You say 'little' because, like, when things don't really work out, you get deeply disappointed.]

[Halibel: Not exactly the kind of support I was hoping for...]

Subaru, seeing Halibel sulk unhappily out of the corner of his eye, let out a brief sigh. Looking around the room, there were traces of destruction all over the place—however, Subaru and the others were all uninjured.

Once one saw that, even Subaru could tell what was going on, no matter how slow on the uptake he was.

[Subaru: You really don't have any intention of killing us.]

Tia looked at Subaru, who came to that conclusion, with her eyes filled with anger and hatred. However, her sharp eyes couldn't kill people, no matter how much bloodlust they had.

The room was cut up by Tia's anger, but that anger was not bloodlust. This is because she "has no intention of killing them", just like she has been saying from the start.

The threat was simply a threat and nothing more. In fact, it was like she was making an abnormal amount of effort to avoid harming them.

[Subaru: And yet, yesterday you nearly killed me.....]

[Tia: I didn't know Rem had a baby at the time.....]

[Subaru: —So that's why.]

[Tia: Oops.]

Tia let the cat out of the bag with a sulky look. It was too late for her to shut her mouth.

In other words, she—

[Rem: You didn't kill us because Subaru-kun and I have a child.....?]

[Tia: You stole the light ball. A sin is a sin. However, that sin is yours. The baby has nothing to do with it. Taking its life would go against my beliefs as a "Shinigami".]

[Subaru: "Shinigami".....]

Hearing Tia express her thoughts, Subaru takes a brief look at Halibel. He felt like Tia had called herself a "Shinigami" last night, but he couldn't remember things very clearly from the time when he was nearly killed. Seeing Subaru give him that look, Halibel tilted his head slightly to indicate that he had no idea what she meant. It was a self-proclaimed name, and nothing more—even with that granted, her power was little too much for the name.

[Subaru: In any case, you won't kill us. You're even avoiding hurting us. So.....]

[Tia: So "give it up"? There's gotta be a limit to how impudent a thief can be. I'm going to get the light ball back. If the baby gets in my way, then I'll just have to wait for it to be born.]

[Subaru: That'd take too long, first of all.....]

While being torn between her beliefs and anxiety, Tia shows that she won't give in one bit.

Seeing Tia's distress, Subaru looks at Rem, wondering what they should do. When Rem nodded at Subaru's look, she spoke while kneeling upright, not even breaking down within the wind.

[Rem: Tia-sama, like I've said many times, I have no idea what this light ball of yours is. I'll repeat myself again, I am not the one who stole it.]

[Subaru: Rem was always with me. Rem had no time to do something so outrageous, and she'd never do such a thing, either. Why are you accusing us anyway? Was there some sort of deciding factor?]

[Tia: Isn't it obvious? —It's the nose.]

[Subaru: —]

Tia answers Subaru's question confidently, pointing at her own nose. Hearing that answer, Subaru grimaces, and he lost his breath as his chest was struck by an unexpected force.

She found them by relying on her sense of smell. Chills and understanding were what welled up once he heard that—things that were expected.

Tia sniffed out Subaru with her sense of smell and came here—

[Tia: Judging by that look, you must know something. Protect your female partner all you want, it's no use. Rem reeks of the smell of a thief!]

[Subaru: ——]

Hearing Tia's triumphant words, Subaru loses his voice for a moment.

Then, he thoroughly thinks about the words she said and says,

[Subaru:Rem? Not me?]

[Tia: Huh? What's this, you trying to protect her with an awful tearjerker act? Sorry, but my nose can't be fooled. My nose tells me that Rem is the culprit!]

Tia sternly points at Rem, and she declared that once again with a triumphant look.

She was aggressive in anticipation of Subaru feeling guilty, based off his reaction. However, it was not the kind of guilt Tia was hoping for.

Thus, a very complicated atmosphere started to spread between Subaru and the others.

[Tia: W—What...you people.....Are you trying to belittle me with those looks?]

[Subaru: We're not.....]

[Rem: There has to be some sort of misunderstanding...]

[Tia: I am not wrong! My nose is absolute! Hey, mutt! You have a dog like face, so you must get it, right?]

[Halibel: Why would you think that I'd take your side? Are you my wife?]

[Tia: Like hell I am—!!]

Tia's white face turns red, and she yelled as she stamped her feet. It no longer looked like she had the intimidating air that she had in the beginning; she was just a lone girl who dug herself into a hole.

After Tia breathed heavily and glared at Subaru and the others one by one,

[Tia: You aren't returning what you stole! You're looking down on me! Who do you people think you are!? You're gonna regret becoming parents if this is how you act!]

[Subaru: Let's stop all this emotional denial. Also, how about you give it up already? You made a mistake. None of us stole whatever that light ball is.]

[Tia: NO I DIDN'T! Rem had to have stolen it! There's no way I'm wrong.....]

[Rem: Okay, well..]

Subaru couldn't figure how how to deal with Tia, who finally started throwing a tantrum. Rem was the one who interrupted Tia, who was acting stubborn like a child, which was improper for how she looked.

[Rem: Tia-sama, it seems you think that Subaru-kun and I have stolen something.]

Rem softly speaks to Tia, as if she was trying to reason with an unreasonable child. After that, Tia's face stiffened, and then she turned around to face Rem.

[Tia: For the record, you are the only one who did it. This male doesn't seem to know about it.]

[Rem: Subaru-kun and I do everything together and go everywhere together. Understand?]

[Tia I—I understand.....]

Rem said, "Good" and raised her finger at Tia, who was quickly discouraged from acting the way she'd acted before as she nodded.

[Rem: I want to get back your stolen light ball. However, we don't know what it is. If you don't believe me.....would you wait until you are convinced?]

[Tia: Until I'm convinced.....]

[Rem: If your nose is correct, then we are the ones who are lying. If you keep an eye on us, eventually we might expose ourselves. That's what I mean.]

Rem jiggles her finger as she says, "What do you think?", leaving the choice up to Tia.

The suggestion would take up quite a lot of time, but Subaru thought of it was a temporary measure to temper a child. However, after Tia pondered the suggestion for a while,

[Tia: —Sounds interesting. All right, I'm in.]

[Subaru: R—Really?]

[Tia: It's as Rem said. She'll get busted eventually for sure, so I'll wait.]

Tia sticks out her somewhat busty chest, and she answered Subaru's doubts confidently. But it was still hard for Subaru to believe her choice. She snorted as she saw his face.

[Tia: I'm not lying. I'm confident in my nose. Look, there's no way I can lose! If I'm wrong, I'll even give you the light ball to make it up to you!]

[Subaru: Attacking us to get it back creates an infinite loop!]

In any case, if Tia has accepted Rem's idea as a good one, then the problem was solved. Or at the very least, Rem and Subaru shouldn't have to worry about being hurt by Tia anymore.

[Subaru: That's if we could trust that she isn't lying, though.]

[Rem: It's fine. I believe that Tia-sama really is telling the truth.I can tell since I watch plenty of kids at temple elementary school.]

[Subaru: It's kinda worrying how that could be used as evidence to convince me.]

Still, she really did sound like a teacher with the tone of that persuasive argument. In other words, Rem successfully convinced him because she was gifted with the skills of a female teacher.

[Subaru: Impressive, Sensei. That was well done.]

[Rem: Of course. But when you're with me, I want to be called wife instead of Sensei.]

[Subaru: —Good point. As expected of my wife. She's the cutest girl ever and she's so reliable.]

[Rem: There you go, well done.]

Rem praises Subaru, who corrected himself, as if she was playing around with him. Seeing her smile, Subaru scratches his head. He thought to himself, "I'm no match for her."

Tia, who quickly noticed them whispering to each other, glares at them angrily.

[Tia: Hey! What are you two whispering about.....is it about the light ball!?!]

[Subaru: Even if we were the culprits, we wouldn't be so stupid enough to whisper about it in front of the owner. How long are you going to stay here anyways? If we've come to a conclusion, then.....]

[Tia: What are you saying? I told you, I'm keeping an eye out until you slip up. I'm staying here.]

Subaru tilted his head as he listened to Tia's tone, which made it sound like she was saying, "Why are you asking something so obvious?"

[Subaru: Staying here.....for how long?]

[Tia: Until you slip up.]

[Subaru: ——]

[Tia: It's still pretty crowded with three people in this room, though. I better not be staying with that mutt. Not only would it be cramped, but I'd get covered in fur.]

[Subaru: You're going to stay here!?!]

She makes a threat from an unexpected perspective, and it causes Subaru to raise his voice as he practically screamed. Hearing that, Tia breaks into a smile in great delight.

[Tia: Ahh, that scream, oh yes.....I finally get to hear it, makes me kinda happy.]

[Subaru: I'm being serious here! As if we'd live with you! This is a house for a husband and a wife, use your head!]

[Tia: —? Isn't Rem already pregnant? What's wrong with me staying here?]

[Subaru: Well.....well?]

When she asked Subaru about his thoughts, something prevented him from replying, "Even so". It seemed Tia was not messing around, and she was saying that it was a genuine question.

If they were having sex just to have kids, then Tia's viewpoint would be correct.

[Subaru: But then at night we'd be missing something needed to keep family happiness.....]

[Tia: *Stare*]

[Subaru: Stop! Don't look at me like that! Even if you do, you still can't live with us!]

Tia looked at Subaru doubtfully, but he still stood his ground while giving excuses. Besides, even if she disregarded the thoughts of the husband and wife, three people would be too much for the room, just like Tia said.

[Subaru: Hal-san, the manager and landlord, wouldn't even allow it anyways. Don't forget that you're the one who destroyed this room and beat me to a pulp!]

No landlord would be bold enough to negotiate deposit and key money after she destroyed the rent so much.

Subaru hoped for that in his statement, and Halibel nodded with his arms folded.

[Halibel: Yeah, Su-san's right. First we have to talk about compensating for the room.]

[Subaru: That's not the point!]

Halibel did not listen to Subaru telling him that this wasn't about the landlord.

[Tia: Me? Compensate for this room?]

[Rem: Tia-sama destroyed it, so that's a given.....that goes for our damaged household goods, too, if you could.]

Rem looks around the room devastated by wind that was now a mess, and she makes that request to Tia.

Things like shelves and furniture were destroyed by the wind slashes. Of course, the tatami mat and walls were, too. There were some cutlery that barely avoided being damaged, but the clothes in the wardrobe and the futon in the closet were probably different.

The daily necessities they obtained by managing with the little income they had were destroyed—it was a bit tear inducing.

[Rem: I'll help clean up, so Tia-sama, you can use this room. Halibel-sama, let Subaru-kun and I use another available room and.....]

[Halibel: Yeah, that's fine. As you know, the tenement house is full of free rooms. Pick whichever you want and move over.]

[Rem: Thank you very much.]

The broken tableware pile up, and the damage to the memories depress Subaru. Rem and Halibel, the realists, put aside his sentiments, and once a room was assigned, they set a plan for the future.

Tia, who had seized the initiative in the beginning, was left behind by the quick progress, and she scratched her cheeks while being taken aback.

[Tia: How should I put this.....you guys are like...tough.]

[Subaru: I'll have to agree with you on that.]

This was the only time Subaru agreed with the beautiful, unreasonable killer.

5

[Halibel: Su-san, got a second?]

Halibel beckoned him and brought him out of the tenement house when Tia started to reluctantly obey Rem, who diligently worked on cleaning the room.

Rem seemed to be enjoying herself, sleeves tied as she completely focused on cleaning the room, and nobody could stop her now that she'd enter such an intense state. It actually seemed like Tia was weak to Rem's pushiness, and she was helping her obediently, although she didn't look like she was getting into it.

[Subaru: Looks like I can take our eyes off of them for a bit.]

Subaru sees that Rem has the situation handled, and he exits the tenement house as he stepped over the door that was out of place. It was already after sunset. The round moon was up in the completely dark night sky, bejeweled with the glimmer of the stars.

Halibel, looking up at the sky as he left a trail of tobacco smoke in it, first starts speaking by saying “Sorry”, and

[Halibel: You were quite frightened during that conversation, right? Sorry for not doing anything.]

[Subaru: It’s not anything you should apologize for.....is what I’d like to say, but I was really frightened. Especially when Tia started to destroy the room.]

Subaru shrugs and uses the conversation as a chance to talk about why they had to clean the room in the first place.

Halibel just watched things play out in the destructive wind without moving an inch. Rem didn’t move to show that she’d stand her ground.

So, as for why Halibel didn’t do anything, stayed silent, and watched the mayhem...

[Halibel: She had no bloodlust. No hostility, either. So I was able to tell that she wouldn’t hurt anyone, even though she acted up like that.You might not understanding my reasoning, though.]

[Subaru: Of course I’d know once I could tell those things were missing. Although I was late to notice, I also came to that conclusion once I saw the end result. It’s just that.....]

[Halibel: Once you considered Rem's safety, you wanted me to stop her? Yeah, I had a feeling you'd think that, so that's why I thought I'd apologize.]

Halibel knocks the ash off his kiseru, apologizes once again, and bowed deeply.

As long as it was rational, Subaru had no complaints for him. Plus, Halibel was helping him out of kindness. It would be too arrogant of him to blame him just because of that decision considering how he hasn't paid him back yet or rewarded him.

[Subaru: Although, I'd appreciate it if I had a say next time. It's not guaranteed that I won't move carelessly and almost get hit by the wind, you know?]

[Halibel: If 1-2 of your limbs fly off from the sharpness, the doctor can put them back on just fine.]

[Subaru: Once I let my head fly off I'm dead!]

Getting hit somewhere meant death. Considering how he didn't get hit, he got lucky. He felt very relieved knowing that he lived by the skin of his teeth.

[Halibel: I'm glad that you forgive me. I kinda felt down for arriving too late last night, too, when you were beat up.]

[Subaru: Really?]

[Halibel: Forgetting about the title as Kararagi's strongest, I do regard myself as a shinobi. And so, being outsmarted sure isn't something to be pleased with.]

Halibel shows his pride, and Subaru tugs on his chin as if to say “So that’s how it is”.

When he heard of ninjas, things like information warfare, undercover agents, assassination, ninjutsu, and all sorts of roles came to mind—but perhaps those were like characteristics of spies from ancient times. Messing up with counterespionage sure would be a failure for a ninja.

[Subaru: In that case, why don’t you let one of the people working for you handle it? Since you’re the strongest ninja in Karagi, aren’t you the leader of Shinobi groups or something?]

[Halibel: Shinobi groups! We have no dangerous gatherings like that. I’ve never even seen any other ninjas outside of myself. How’d you come up with that idea?]

[Subaru: Don’t you have special educational institutes like shinobi villages or something?]

[Halibel: I’ve heard about some living in the middle of nowhere in hidden villages due to racial circumstances, but as for my wolf brethren, they couldn’t run and hide so they’re reaching extinction.....]

[Subaru: An extinction joke!]

If ninjas were endangered, then so were wolves. Halibel’s culture and race were on the verge of dying out. They were also starting to decline because they knew their place.

[Subaru: Basically, don’t expect too much from your ninja side.]

[Halibel: Not sure what a ninja is, but yes, you certainly shouldn’t expect too much. So, I have a proposal that isn’t related to my apology from earlier.]

[Subaru: A proposal?]

[Halibel: —About Tia, don't you think we should get rid of her while we can?]

He spoke those words with no hesitation in his usual tone. And so, Subaru completely froze. 5 seconds pass, then 10, slowly.

[Subaru: Hal-san?]

[Halibel: She has no bloodlust. Her hostility has settled down as of now, too. However, she is still dangerous. If we turn our backs on her defenselessly, she could get rid of us if we don't do anything.]

[Subaru: Well.....still, even so...]

The emotions in Halibel's slit eyes weren't clear. But his statement truly did have a certain level of persuasiveness. This was the chance to free themselves from anxiety about the future.

Even if it was now, right after Rem and Tia had explored the possibility of coexisting, although in a superficial way.

[Halibel: You see, my nose isn't picking up Tia-chan. Not just yesterday, but right now, too.]

[Subaru: Even now? Is it because she got rid of her scent?]

[Halibel: Meticulously, yes. I've never heard of this "Shinigami" nickname that she spoke of, and she's such a beautiful woman. Like it or not, she'd become the talk of the town should she show up. And yet, I don't know who she is. That means pretty much nobody knows her.]

A mysterious woman with an unknown identity that took countermeasures against Halibel's sense of smell—nothing about Tia's position changed.

They were now able to have conversations and the time for them to part has been postponed. Those were the only things that have been accomplished. Not to mention, how effective would the arrangement be with this girl who had a tendency to be moody?

[Halibel: If we act now, we could make it seem like she was never there. Rem-chan will have to lie, but I'll deal with the girl.]

Signs of the cold smell of blood came from Halibel, who made a cruel proposal.

The man before Subaru finally didn't seem like just a lively playboy. It was the first time he could tell that he was a shinobi deemed the strongest in Kararagi.

But at the same time, he could also tell what Halibel was expecting as he gave off a cold, intimidating air.

[Subaru:Sorry, Hal-san. For making you play the bad guy, leaving you to hold the bag.]

[Halibel: ——]

[Subaru: But you don't need to play the bad guy. It's not that I'm not worried.....but Rem already told Tia so much. So I'll believe in her too.]

[Halibel: Can you believe in that girl?]

[Subaru: I'm not talking about Tia. I'm going to believe in the eyes of my wife, the one who persuaded Tia.]

In the back, they were working on tidying things and cleaning the room. The voices he could hear were having a conversation, and they were Rem who was gung-ho, and Tia, who was sulky—it seemed things were going somewhat smoothly.

He wanted to see the light at the end of that tunnel. Given that the killer doesn't end up killing them, that is.

[Halibel:Su-san, you sure aren't one to let things go, huh.]

Hearing Subaru's reply, Halibel puts his kiseru back in his mouth once again, and he murmured.

Then, the cold air coming from his body vanished within an instant. Once that went away, all that's left was the same old sluggish wolf.

He had acted the way he did out of consideration for Subaru—he acted like a shinobi so that Subaru would feel less guilty if he ever wanted to eliminate danger.

[Subaru: You said that I don't let things go, but I feel like that should be said about you instead with how you were acting.]

[Halibel: No way. Besides, you're the one who forgave someone who nearly killed you, and you don't even know if she'll change. This isn't just a matter of being softhearted.]

[Subaru: Ahh, now that you mention it...]

Halibel tells Subaru that, and he remembered how Tia nearly killed him. Although he knew how strong she was, he had forgotten about how he was targeted by her violence nature.

This explains why Halibel was worried about Subaru and Rem.

[Halibel: Did you really forget? Even with all the pain you still feel all over your body?]

[Subaru: Don't remind me, now it's coming back to me.....]

Subaru remembers his joint pain, and he moves around his limbs as he said "Oww" with a pathetic look on his face. Seeing him act like that, this is when Halibel let out a long sigh in a dumbfounded manner.

[Halibel: If Su-san and Rem-chan insist, then alright. I won't do anything.]

[Subaru: I owe you one...actually, not sure if I should say that here. Well, I already owe you plenty anyway.]

[Halibel: You keep on indebting yourself. Looking forward to the day you pay me back.]

Halibel said that while smiling, though it wasn't clear if he wanted to get paid back or not. Hearing his words, Subaru pouted, and he hung his head as if to say that he was absolutely correct.

Ever since he came to the town Banan, he's just been depending on people's kindness and being helped.

[Subaru: I gotta pay everyone back eventually.]

[Halibel: It'd be problematic if you died on us, so hang in there and stay alive until then.]

[Subaru: Damn, what a positive reason to avoid dying.]

Subaru smiles back at Halibel, hearing him say that, and he stretched his body. Just then, a voice coming from inside the room called out to the two people outside.

[Rem: Subaru-kun, please help me choose some clothes that would be fine.]

[Tia: You males are the only ones taking it easy...This is why you can't trust males. They should just spend all of their time outside hunting, honestly.]

Hearing Rem and Tia call on them, Subaru and Halibel look at each other, and they both move.

Halbiel knocks the ash off his kiseru, while Subaru stretched lightly.

—And with that, the night of day zero of the noisy days at the tenement house advanced.