
ASCENDANCE OF A BOOKWORM
I'll do anything to become a librarian!
official FANBOOK 2


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One Winter's Day

(Told from Myne's perspective. Originally posted on Miya Kazuki's Narou page.)

Dad didn't have work today, so he and Tuuli had gone to gather parues. I would have only been dead weight, so I was staying at the gate to help Otto with his math work, as per usual.

Noon passed. Parue gathering ended when the sun reached its highest point, so a bunch of people came trudging back from the forest. The guards were always busy making sure nobody suspicious attempted to sneak in among the returning crowd, which meant Otto had to go out to help. I continued scratching away at my stone slate in the meantime, and soon enough, Dad poked his head into the room.

"Time to go, Myne."

"Where's Tuuli?"

"She went ahead with Ralph and Lutz. We gotta hurry."

Dad picked me up, placed me on his shoulders, then carried me out of the room and away from the gate. He still refused to let me walk when he was in a rush; I was so slow that my fate was to be carried whenever busy adults had somewhere to be. He strode so quickly that we soon caught up to Tuuli and the others.

"Hi Tuuli. How many did you get this time?" I asked.

"Three! All thanks to Dad coming with me!" she replied. The basket sitting atop the sleigh she was pulling did indeed contain three parues.

"And you, Lutz? Ralph?"

"We got seven. We almost got eight, but we just weren't quick enough."

We continued our journey home, talking all the while. Eventually we left the

main road and entered an alleyway. There were several people arguing up ahead.

“Bleh. Had to be on my day off...” Dad grumbled as he put me down. “I gotta check this out. Tuuli, go ahead in case I need to go back and tell the gate. Myne, stay here. Sorry, Lutz, but could you stick with her?”

“I can, but...” Lutz trailed off and turned to his brothers. Zasha, the oldest, responded with a nod.

“Sure. Why not?” he said. “We’re not gonna stay with ya though.”

“Thanks,” Dad said to Zasha. He unwound his scarf and then wrapped it around Lutz and me. “Don’t leave his side no matter what, alright, Myne?”

“Couldn’t even if I wanted to,” I replied, patting a hand against the scarf practically binding me to Lutz.

Dad rushed over to the rowdy people, showing remarkable agility for someone wading through snow, and demanded to know what they were doing.

“Right,” Ralph said. “We’re off.”

No sooner had Ralph and the others gone than everything went really quiet. I stared aimlessly in the direction Dad had gone, hoping he would return soon, and it was then that I noticed Lutz was doing the same.

“Sorry, Lutz. It must suck having to wait in the cold with me like this.”

“Nah. The sun’s out today. I’m more worried about you catching a cold,” he replied, glancing down at the scarf as he started shuffling over a little. A smile crept onto my face as I realized he was moving to shield me from the wind.

“I’m fine, really. Dad’s scarf is super warm. You’re warming up too, right?”

“Maybe.”

We exchanged a smile. Dad reappeared again a brief moment later, having managed to settle the issue with his mediation skills.

“Sorry about that,” he said. “Let’s get home. We’re having parue cakes tonight.”

Author’s Note: This is a short story I thought up after seeing the illustration Suzuka-sama drew for New Year’s Day in 2016.



Illustrated by Suzuka

I’m Not Givin’ Ya My Daughter!

(A special short story originally written for Animate in 2015.)

“How’s your daughter, Captain?”

Leckle stopped me at the gate on my way to my shift. From what I knew, he was better than average at math, and Myne’s crazy work had really inspired him to improve. These reasons were why Otto had him pinned as his replacement. Otto had decided that he was going to quit being a soldier in a few years’ time to actually start working as a member of a merchant family.

“Who’s asking?” I shot back. “I’m not gonna let you marry either of ’em.”

“What are you even talking about...? They’re a decade too young for me to even consider that. Gah, let me get back on track. I’m asking since we haven’t seen Myne at the gate all summer. I’ve been stuck helping Otto all alone.”

Otto’s style was to offload his work on anyone capable of doing it, and Leckle was the only one good enough at math to make a good replacement. He normally got Myne to do the double-checking work when she came by, but that wasn’t happening anymore—the temple had completely stolen her away. Otto was understandably devastated. Nobody could have seen it coming.

“A rich merchant hired Myne to work in his store,” I explained. “She’s doing math for him, so she doesn’t have time to waste here at the gate. Also, don’t forget how weak she is.” We weren’t telling anyone that Myne had joined the temple; instead, we were saying she was being looked after by the Gilberta Company. It wasn’t entirely untrue—she and Lutz were going there to sell the weird things they were making together.

“Man, it’s been rough lately...” Leckle sighed. “Otto just keeps comparing me to your daughter.”

Myne was crazy smart—that was what people told me, at least. I personally wasn’t sure how to measure something like that. What I did know was that Otto

had turned down more helpers than I could count, each time groaning that "teaching idiots is a waste of time." And after just a brief moment with Myne, that same man had practically begged me to let her be his assistant.

I was well aware Myne had negotiated with Otto, then earned the approval of a rich merchant and secured a position under him as an apprentice. Her achievements hadn't stopped there either—now that she was in the temple, she was serving as the orphanage director and giving the High Priest a hand with his work. I didn't know what made someone smart, but I did know my daughter was pretty up there.

"Heh. Yeah, the gods sure do love my daughter. She's special, unlike you."

But her being special was why the temple had gone after her in the first place. There were times now when I kind of resented the gods.

"Gahhh. You always exaggerate, Captain, but she really is special. And I really hate being compared to her."

I could hardly blame him there. It must have been miserable staring at boards and paperwork while the other soldiers were training and standing guard. Myne and Otto were two of the rare few who actually liked that kind of work. If someone told me to do math all day, I'd want to quit my job for sure.

"It's not right for Otto to force all the work onto you, Leckle. I'll tell him to train some other soldiers too."

I'll also try asking Myne if she knows any good tricks for teaching others...

Effa had mentioned that Myne tutored Lutz in math and reading over the winter to help him become an apprentice merchant. He'd apparently made a lot of progress in just one season.

When I spoke to Myne, the first thing she said was that I needed to look for someone who likes paperwork the same as Otto.

"You'll want to find someone who lacks stamina and wants to do nothing but bookwork, like me. Guards brimming with passion for building muscle and protecting the city will never be good at paperwork; I'm sure they struggle enough with finding motivation to study. At the end of the day, you can't force

people to learn. It'd be nice if you could just hire gray priests, since they're good at math and used to dealing with nobles, but oh well..."

Gray priests could most likely get a job at the gate with my recommendation, but they didn't know anything about life out here. They lived in a completely separate world, and the last thing I needed was looking after a bunch of guys who didn't even know enough about the lower city to buy from stalls.

"As useful as their skills sound, hiring them seems pretty dang tough..." I murmured, remembering how their eyes would dart all over the place as they walked through the city, and the way they'd recoil from shouts and arguments. They weren't bad people, but they couldn't work at the gate even if they were doing nothing but paperwork. The lower city would eat them alive.

Myne smiled. "It might not be possible now, but I hope that in ten or twenty years, it becomes normal for orphans to leave the temple. Maybe they could even seek employment in the lower city."

She was wearing the expression of an orphanage director thinking about her orphans' futures, and I could suddenly feel the vast gap that had opened up between us. She was getting absorbed into the temple—into a world I couldn't enter. I instinctively pulled her into a tight hug.

I'm not givin' ya my daughter! Not to the temple or the gods!

My Handful of a Little Sister

(Told from Tuuli's perspective. Originally posted on Miya Kazuki's Narou page.)

On the day I learned to bind books at the orphanage, Myne was bringing home one of the finished picture books. She'd technically made one here yesterday, but that was just an example for her to bring to the workshop. This was her first time bringing home a book that was actually finished.

"Aah! So this is what it's like to bring a book home!" Myne exclaimed. She was hugging the picture book Lutz had given her from the workshop, wearing the biggest smile I'd ever seen. "It was such a long road to get here—such a long and painful road—but I've finally done it! I've got a book I can keep in my room! Yesss!"

"Sister Myne. Be mindful of your behavior," her attendant Rosina warned, having watched Myne jump for joy even though she was still wearing her blue shrine maiden robes. Myne responded with a polite smile and said that she'd be more careful, but I really didn't see that happening—I could already see her well-mannered expression giving way to a very dopey grin.

"Myne, you're getting too excited," I said with a chuckle.

"I mean, duh! I can start keeping books at home now!"

Aah, it's over. She's gonna get sick for sure.

I shook my head and looked at Lutz, who shrugged in turn. "Let's go home already," he said to Myne, not even trying to hide the exasperation in his voice. "At this rate, you're gonna collapse on the way back."

"Okay!" Myne exclaimed. She bounded up the stairs with the picture book in hand, rushing to get changed, which resulted in another scolding from Rosina.

"I don't think she's going to listen to anything we say today..." I observed.

“True, but she finally got what she’s been working toward for two whole years,” Lutz replied. “Can’t blame her for being so happy. Plus, I mean, when I think about the days she was gathering up grass and trying to make clay tablets, I feel more like giving her a pat on the back than anything.”

Lutz had played a bigger role than anyone in Myne’s book-making attempts. Dad had given him a little money and shared some food with him, but still—even as her big sister, I was really impressed that he’d managed to tolerate her weirdness for so long.

“It’s all thanks to you, Lutz. Thanks for helping make Myne’s weird dream come true,” I said sincerely. Lutz frowned in response, looking like he didn’t really feel right about it.

“You and my brothers always talk like being with her is hard, but she’s done a lot for me. I’ve pretty much been helping out so she can make my own dream come true too,” he said, looking down at the apprentice clothes he was wearing and tugging on the shoulder a little. As far as he was concerned, he and Myne were equal. If not for her help and advice, he wouldn’t have become an apprentice merchant.

“I mean, I do think Myne paved the way for you, what with her weird inventions getting Mr. Benno’s attention, but you’ve definitely been having a harder time than she has.”

“Maybe, but you and my brothers really don’t get how amazing she is,” Lutz said, his expression nothing but serious. I knew from when I’d seen her negotiating with Benno over the hairpins that she was doing something special, but I usually saw her being a burden on everyone, so it was hard for me to actually think about her that way.

“I guess we just don’t know what Myne’s like in the Gilberta Company.”

“Yeah, but, like... that’s not what I’m talking about. Look, do you remember how Myne taught me math and reading?”

I nodded, recalling how Myne had tutored Lutz over the winter. He really had worked hard to become an apprentice merchant.

“Do you know how much merchants pay for home tutors who teach that

kinda thing?”

“Nuh uh. How could I?”

“A large silver per month, and that gets you three one-bell sessions a week. *A large silver.* That’s one hundred thousand lions. Myne did that much for me without asking for any money in return.”

Lutz had apparently been stunned silent when he heard other apprentice merchants talk about how much their parents were paying for tutors. They had asked him how he had learned math and reading without being able to afford one himself, and it was then that he understood just how amazing Myne was.

Mm... When he puts it like that, I guess she is kind of amazing...

I entertained the thought for a moment, but it was blown away in an instant when Myne came rushing down the stairs. “Sorry for the wait! Let’s go hooome!” she exclaimed, completely missing a step just a beat later. She would have fallen down the stairs had Rosina not caught her at the last moment.

Never mind. She’s not amazing. She’s a clumsy goof.

“Myne, put that book in your basket,” I said. “If you fall again, there’s no way you’ll be able to catch yourself while you’re holding it like that.”

Myne looked between me and the basket I was holding out, her brows knitted in a frown. “But I wanted to enjoy the smell of the ink and paper on the way home...” she mumbled. “Isn’t that what you’re supposed to do with new books? Revel in their glorious existence?”

“You’re not going to fool anyone with that nonsense,” I shot back. “Also, that’s your first book, remember?”

Myne looked up with a start, at which point Lutz muttered “dummy” under his breath. I stepped forward, nabbed the book, and stuck it in the basket.

“C’mon, Myne. You’ve gotta understand the dangers here. You can’t have people see you walking around with a bunch of expensive paper. We’re just kids. They’d steal it from us for sure.”

Paper was expensive, though with all the ripped sheets Myne kept at home and did all sorts of things with, that fact was easy to forget. Parchment made

from animals was the most common type, and even that was only used by rich people or nobles. It wasn't something that kids like us, dressed in commoner clothes, should ever be walking around with.

Myne flinched and started to shiver at the thought of the book being stolen.

"Tuuli, Tuuli! Where should I keep it?! Should I ask Dad to make me a bookshelf after all?"

"Keep it in your box until you've got more. Just watch where you're walking."

Even though I'd put the book away in the basket, Myne kept glancing over at it as we made our way home. She was struggling to walk straight as a result, so giddy that she was pretty much drifting from side to side.

Geez! She should know walking like that is dangerous!

In the end, Lutz and I sandwiched Myne between us, each taking one of her hands. "This is nice. I was just thinking it's a little cold out," she said.

You know, Myne, we're not doing this for warmth. That was what I wanted to say, but she was smiling so happily that I decided to keep my mouth shut.

"I'm back!" Myne announced. "Look, look! This is the first picture book I've ever brought into my very own home to keep!"

She had already shown Mom and Dad the same finished picture book yesterday, but she showed it to them again anyway. They exchanged a conflicted glance.

"Myne, ya showed us that one yesterday," Dad said. "We already looked inside."

Uh huh. She really went crazy over it yesterday.

Dad was wearing a grimace, probably having flashbacks to last night. Myne had rambled on about bible stories while he drank. He had only given the picture book a quick look through, but she naturally kept going anyway.

"Yesterday's book was just a test run, so I had to bring it back to the temple. But this one's staying here forever! Isn't that amazing?! It's our home's first

book! Aah, this is bliss. Isn't it great to have books that we can read whenever we want? Don't you just want there to be more and more here?"

Not really...

Myne held the book up in the air and started spinning around. It was nice to see her having fun, but this was getting dangerous. She'd shown just as much excitement on the way back too, so her stamina was bound to run out soon.

And the moment that thought crossed my mind, Myne stepped on the ground strangely and tipped to one side.

Oh. She's falling over.

"Myne!"

"Gyaah! My book!"

Dad threw his arms out toward Myne, but rather than grabbing on to them, she spun around and embraced the fall. Her only priority was making sure the book didn't get dirty.

I... I've never seen Myne move so fast in my life.

I watched with a strange sense of awe as Myne fell on her back, bumped her head against the floor with a resounding *thump*, and then immediately sprang back up. "Is my book okay?!" she blurted, thoroughly checking it all over.

I was at a complete loss for words. Meanwhile, Dad stood frozen in place, looking forlorn, his arms still outstretched.

"Myne, worry about yourself when you fall, alright? Are you feeling okay?" I asked.

"I'm fine," she replied. "These wounds are honorable."

More like dishonorable.

She was proudly puffing out her chest, and I didn't have a clue why. Everyone was looking down at her with exasperation, but she completely ignored us and continued flipping the book around as she looked for any damage.

"My injuries will eventually heal, but I don't have any tools to fix books. That means a damaged book is probably damaged for good. I might need to start

working on that.”

What I was worried about most was Myne’s head. Not because she’d just hit the ground, mind you—it simply didn’t seem screwed on right. Wasn’t there anything we could do to get her to care about something other than books?

Mom rested a hand on her large belly and sighed, relieved to see that Myne wasn’t hurt. “Myne, if you don’t want the book to get dirty, why don’t you just calm down?”

“I’m fine. I’m calm. Now I just need to read the book aloud as much as I can so that my little sibling grows into a bookworm too! Eheheh...”

She cared about a book getting damaged more than she cared about herself getting hurt. As we spoke, she was probably thinking about the next book she was going to make.

Geez, Myne! You’re ridiculous!

I knew Myne was doing a ton of impressive things, like negotiating on equal terms with the owner of a big store, earning tons of money, and getting the respect of a bunch of orphans... but from my perspective, she was just a massive handful.

Studying Literature and Picture Books

(Originally written for the Shosen Group ✕ TO Books Fair.)

“But... give me a book for helping, please. I want to learn to read too,” I said, having worked up the courage after Myne asked me to help sew together some pages. I would be going to the orphanage more and more, and the last thing I wanted was to feel like the only person in the world who couldn’t read and write.

I mean, not knowing how to read is supposed to be normal, but everyone I know seems to be able to read and write.

Myne could do both, of course. Even Dad could, since he worked as a guard. It used to be that he couldn’t write very well even though he knew how to read, but when he found out Myne had started to learn from Otto, he had taken up studying on his own to maintain his pride as a father.

Lutz had learned to read just last winter, having been taught by Myne so he could become an apprentice merchant, but now he was good enough to read contracts like they were nothing at all. It was so impressive that Mrs. Karla bragged about it all the time. Mrs. Corinna also knew how to write, since she made notes on the boards she used for work. With my aim being to one day join her workshop, I’d need to learn to read and write too.

And above all else, I didn’t want Myne and Lutz to leave me behind.

“This is a slate pen. You hold it like this. Oh, not like that, Tuuli. You can’t grip it like that,” Myne said.

My lessons started with me holding a white slate pen and trying to draw lines on the stone slate in front of me. Learning to write actual letters was apparently still a bit too advanced for me right now.

I held the pen as Myne instructed and tried drawing a line just as she

demonstrated, but for some reason, I couldn't put enough force into it. The line wasn't even remotely straight either. It was weird, thin, and wobbled around all over the place.

"Just like there's a right way to hold a needle, there's a right way to hold a pen," Myne explained. "You can draw lines no matter how you hold them, but if you don't learn to hold them correctly, you'll smash their tips to pieces."

I kept drawing lines, making sure I was holding the pen in the way that made it hard to use force, but they still didn't end up straight. Myne was doing it so easily too.

"Keep trying no matter how much you're struggling," she said. "If you can't draw straight lines or smooth curves, you won't be able to sketch clothing designs."

I was even having to practice reading letters in between writing sessions.

"Once you've memorized the spoken text, follow along the letters with your eyes. Soon enough you'll be able to write them yourself. You've still got a long time before you need to go to Corinna's workshop, so you don't need to rush as Lutz did."

"But it still took Lutz over half a year, right? I want to ask to move to Mrs. Corinna's workshop, so I can't waste any time."

Lehange contracts lasted three years, and any arrangements to move workshops needed to be made in advance. That only gave me a year of wiggle room at most.

"A year is more than enough. You should try to actually enjoy the process too," Myne said with a smile. "If you start to hate books and letters, you'll never pick up any of this stuff. Mr. Otto's struggling right now because all the apprentices who were forced into learning aren't remembering a thing." As she spoke, she spread out the pages of the bible picture book for kids.

"'The God of Darkness spent a staggeringly long time alone,'" she read, tracing her finger along the words so that I could follow along. The pure joy in her expression was unmistakable, and there was a sparkle in her golden, moon-like eyes.

“The God of Darkness spent a staggeringly long time alone.” I repeated the words to myself, watching as Myne more or less melted with bliss. I couldn’t recognize the letters yet, so the most I could do was repeat what she said.

“Right, right. Good. Next line. ‘The Goddess of Light appeared next to the solitary God of Darkness, brightening his surroundings with light.’”

In the story, the God of Darkness and the Goddess of Light met and got married. They then had four children: the Goddess of Water, the God of Fire, the Goddess of Wind, and the Goddess of Earth.

“‘The first to be born was Flutrane the Goddess of Water. Flutrane has the power to heal and purify.’”

I continued repeating the contents of the book back to Myne. Once we were done, I returned to drawing lines on the slate.

“Great,” Myne said. “Now that you can draw lines that straight, I think you can move on to writing letters.”

After much practice drawing individual lines, I finally started to learn actual letters. Myne first taught me to write my name.

“You’ll be using your name the most, after all. Lutz had to write his on a contract when he joined the Gilberta Company. If you want to join Corinna’s workshop, you’ll probably have to do the same.”

“Wait, really?! You should have said that earlier!”

Drawing lines was hard enough, so it made sense that memorizing all the letters was even harder. Lutz had memorized them all over the winter, but I wasn’t sure I could manage that in time for when I needed to ask Mrs. Corinna whether I could join her workshop. I was getting super, super nervous.

I wrote my name while carefully looking at the example Myne had provided. She went on to teach me her own name, the names of everyone in our family, the names of my friends, Mrs. Corinna’s name, and how to write “the Gilberta Company.”

“Oh, Lutz is here,” Myne said. “I need to get going.” She was heading to the

temple almost every day for winter preparations, and unlike most apprentices, she didn't get every other day off.

She really is going there as much as she can, even though she gets sick and bedridden so often.

I kept, um... "transcribing" the text from the picture book, at Myne's instruction. A short while later, I heard a quiet *thud*. I looked up and saw Mom with her big belly setting a cup of water on the table.

"I see you're working hard, honey."

"This is super hard. It's crazy that Lutz learned all these over the winter, but it's even crazier that Myne learned them all while helping with math at the gate."

I wasn't exactly sure when it had happened, but Myne had mentioned helping Mr. Otto teach the apprentices at the gate. In other words, she was already educating others less than a year after she had gone there for the first time. I hadn't really understood it at the time, but now I knew how impossible that really was.

"Ahaha. That reminds me of when I was a little girl. My father made me help out at the gate too."

"Your father, Mom? You mean Granddad?"

"That's right. He was a gate commander. You know how nobles sometimes have meetings at the gates? He taught me to prepare tea and speak properly there. He never taught me my letters though, since I didn't have any real use for them."

Granddad and Grandma were both gone now. Mom didn't talk about them much.

"If Myne had kept helping out at the gate and doing her writing at home instead of going to the temple, I'm sure she would've been taught to prepare tea for meetings, just as I was."

"Mm... I can't see Myne actually managing to boil water properly..." I mused aloud. She couldn't even draw water from the well yet, let alone make tea.

Mom and I couldn’t help but laugh as we tried to picture it, but it wasn’t long before my eyes dropped back down to the slate. “Mom, want to learn letters too? We can learn at the same time.”

“I’m a bit busy making the baby’s clothes and diapers, so maybe another day. You can teach me in the winter if we have the time.”

“Wait, you want me to teach you?” I asked, blinking in surprise.

“Mm-hmm,” Mom replied with a mischievous smile. “Be sure to learn well so you can help me out.”

“Okay! I’ll do my best!”

I was so happy to know Mom was willing to rely on me that I felt even more motivated than before. And so, with a fire lit under me, I worked even harder at studying... until a certain question came to mind.

Just how much is this book worth, anyway?

I knew the hairpins I made were being sold at a high price, so when Myne came back from the temple, contemplating about the next one, I took the opportunity to ask about the book.

“Umm... We made it in the workshop, so the base cost isn’t very high... but I guess it would go for about one small gold and eight large silvers in a store?”

“Whaaat?!”

I recoiled in surprise, my eyes flitting between Myne and the picture book. I couldn’t believe she had brought something so valuable home with her, and it was almost unthinkable that she wanted to make even more of them.

“I want to make them a little more affordable, but plant paper is still expensive, and ink is a real bottleneck... With Benno being so forceful about securing profit, I imagine it’ll be a while before the price goes down.”

Myne seemed focused on how to reduce the price, but that wasn’t at all what I had meant. “This isn’t something we should be keeping here at home, right? I shouldn’t be studying with something so expensive!”

“What? What are you talking about, Tuuli...? I made it as an educational resource to help children learn to read,” Myne said. She looked utterly

confused, but I was the one who was really bewildered.

Myne apparently wasn't bothered about leaving something worth almost two small golds here in the house, and she was fine with letting both me and the soon-to-be-born baby use it. I had never thought the picture book was worth so much money. The blood drained from my face when I thought about how carelessly I had been handling it.

"U-Um, Myne... Can books be washed...?"

"No! Tuuli! Don't wash the book! The paper will get ruined if you soak it in water! Don't wash it no matter what!"

"Oh... Then how do you clean it when it gets dirty?" I glanced at the book and noticed there were already some white smears on its pages from the dust of my slate pen. That sent a jolt of panic through me, but Myne just gave a casual smile.

"It's best not to get them dirty in the first place, but it doesn't really matter that much if you do. Really, don't worry about it."

"How can I not worry when they're so expensive?!" I exclaimed. At this point, I was scared to even touch the picture book.

What should I do?! I shouldn't have asked for one of my own!

A Tea Party with My Older Sister

(Originally written as a purchasing bonus for the TO Books online store.)

Last summer, my older sister married a noble of the Veronica faction. She had just recently returned to our home estate, having received permission from her husband to spend a few days with her family, and now I was about to have a tea party with her for the first time in quite a while.

One sees their family much less often once they are married, and since outside tea parties are focused more on socializing with others than spending time with one's family, there had been no opportunities for my sister and I to have a private discussion. I was consequently rather pleased that we were having a tea party with just the two of us.

I took the first sip of tea, as was common etiquette. My sister shortly followed suit, albeit with a great deal more grace than when she had previously lived with us. She then got straight to the point.

"So, Christel—just what manner of tea party *was* that harspiel assembly everyone has been speaking about? You and Mother attended, correct?"

"We did. It was positively splendid. As I am sure you have heard, the songs Lord Ferdinand played were simply marvelous. His voice had such richness that it was impossible not to become completely enraptured. There is no doubting that a princess once sent him an invitation to play."

I had attended the Royal Academy with Lady Christine, and while her playing was certainly impressive, I could not help but prefer Lord Ferdinand's. I closed my eyes and reveled in the memory, only for my sister to interrupt in a faintly impatient tone.

"Please do describe what manner of gathering it was. The event has been brought up at every single tea party I've attended since."

She hadn't been able to attend herself since her husband in the Veronica faction had not given his permission, but the harspiel assembly would no doubt continue to be the topic of discussion at all tea parties for quite some time.

I sighed. "Your husband is a member of the Veronica faction, so you cannot change your allegiance as easily as us neutral nobles. Your timing truly was unfortunate... To think Lady Veronica would be detained not even a year after your marriage."

Had she waited just one more year, the political shift in power would have allowed her to cancel her engagement. Divorces, on the other hand, were viewed much more negatively within noble society. That said, my sister was a little too old to be looking for a new partner in any case.

"I resolved to marry a noble from the Veronica faction two years ago, when the rumors of Lady Veronica preparing for Lord Wilfried's baptism began to spread. It seemed certain that she would maintain an iron grip on her authority for years to come, but... I suppose nothing ever goes the way one wishes. I suspect the Goddess of Time was involved."

"It is the fault of Aub Ehrenfest. I must admit, his harspiel performance was splendid as well, but he is the one who ruined your and our families."

I was highly displeased with the aub, though I could only speak ill of him in private family discussions such as this. Lord Sylvester had refused to take a second wife no matter how many times Lady Veronica ordered it, instead devoting himself entirely to Lady Florencia. This had resulted in many nobles thinking Lady Veronica's power would wane when he became aub.

That had not been the case, however. Nothing had changed when he came to power. Lord Ferdinand was sent to the temple, despite having achieved the highest grades in the Royal Academy, and the archducal family was surrounded at all times by sycophants of the Veronica faction. For these reasons, the neutral nobles who carefully eyed the balance of power had steadily begun to favor Lady Veronica.

"When Lord Sylvester and Lady Florencia were entrusting the upbringing of their child to Lady Veronica, who could be blamed for thinking her power was set in stone?" I remarked.

“Indeed. That is why I asked Father for his permission to marry a noble from the Veronica faction.”

After my sister’s marriage last year, I was instructed to look for a husband from the Veronica faction as well. I was also told to avoid getting close to Leisegang nobles in the Royal Academy as our family shifted from being neutral to supporting the Veronica faction.

“And yet, to think the balance of power would completely flip overnight...”

Aub Ehrenfest had suddenly arrested Lady Veronica at the end of spring. He had shown her nothing but obedience for so many years prior, so nobody had expected it in the slightest. Under normal circumstances, one would plan ahead a tremendous amount before arresting the mother of an aub, but there were no signs that this had been the case here. The political waters had been quiet and still, with none of the usual ripples.

“My husband told me that not even his retainers or any of the high-ranking nobles who accompanied him to the Archduke Conference knew about his plans. It all came much too suddenly. What in the world was going through the aub’s mind...?” my sister complained as we both sipped our tea. If the aub had planned to get rid of Lady Veronica all this time, I would have rather he made it more apparent so that we could prepare accordingly.

“The aub’s thoughts are beyond me, but we do know he promptly adopted Lady Elvira’s daughter, a girl who was the subject of much scorn from Lady Veronica. We can imagine the Leisegang nobles will start receiving more favor now.”

“Indeed. Had Lady Veronica been in power, the aub would never have been allowed to adopt one of Lady Elvira’s daughters, no matter how much Ehrenfest needs her mana.”

The aub adopting Lady Rozemyne was a symbolic gesture that he would favor Leisegang nobles moving forward. He had surely made this move so that he would not have to take a wife other than Lady Florencia.

“Christel, my husband is so taken by the Veronica faction that I fear the other nobles will soon leave him behind. In fact, he still refuses to accept that the balance of power has shifted at all.”

Just as few Leisegang nobles had expressed their obedience to Lady Veronica, few members of the Veronica faction were submitting to this abrupt change.

“I understand your fears, dear sister, but I imagine the aub will strive not to eliminate members of the Veronica faction, but to absorb them into the Leisegang fold instead. Many members of the Veronica faction were present during the harspiel assembly, and the majority of those among his retainers are likewise of the Veronica faction. He cannot distance them all over mere faction politics.”

Nobles of the Veronica faction were present all throughout Ehrenfest’s upper power structures. It was not possible to suddenly eliminate them all without putting the daily operation and management of the duchy into complete jeopardy.

“That would be ideal, but he is the man who imprisoned his mother overnight, without so much as a warning to his retainers. It is hard to imagine he will give much thought to the position we or our futures have been thrust into.”

Our house was neutral to begin with, so it was possible for us to lean toward either faction depending on our next actions. Now that my sister had married a noble from the Veronica faction, however, this would not be easy for her unless her husband changed his mind as well.

“Will you be marrying a Leisegang noble, Christel...?”

“I believe so. Father says it is essential for us to return to neutrality. That is why I was allowed to attend the harspiel assembly, after all.”

Father had gone as white as a sheet when he found out Lady Veronica had been imprisoned, considering that we had so recently leaned toward her faction. From that point onward, he began spending his days thinking only of a way for us to turn back to the now-dominating Lady Florencia faction. The nobility was thankfully still in a panic, which gave us a prime opportunity to shift ourselves back to the primary power. My marriage would play a significant role in this.

“Your final term at the Royal Academy is this winter, correct? Will you be able to find an escort in such a short time span?” my sister asked, worried. I would

indeed have to find a Leisegang boy to escort me before my graduation ceremony, otherwise I would need to ask my uncle or grandfather to escort me.

"I would at the very least like to find someone who will boost my image, but I cannot see that being uncomplicated. I have asked Lady Helmina for her assistance and shall be attempting to interact with Leisegang nobles as much as possible."

"Lady Helmina? Did Father not forbid you from speaking to her, given that she has a Leisegang mother? Have you been keeping in contact with her regardless?" my sister probed, looking at me with exasperation. I could already feel my face flushing. Despite the orders Mother and Father had given me, I was still secretly friends with Lady Helmina.

"She is such a good person; I did not want to cut her off due to the circumstances of adults. Plus, our friendship remains only in the classrooms of the Royal Academy. I am not doing anything that will inconvenience our family." I avoided eye contact as I gave my excuses, though I knew they would not change the fact I had disobeyed my parents. "Still, it is thanks to Lady Helmina that I was able to publicly show I am on good terms with the Leisegangs during the harspiel assembly. All's well that ends well, would you not agree?"

Mother and I had only been able to associate positively with the Leisegangs because Lady Helmina and her mother had been willing to sit with us.

"I deeply regret that my marriage has put undue pressure on you, so I am relieved to know you have at least some connection with the Leisegangs. I feel as if my burden has been lessened somewhat," my sister said with an apologetic smile.

I smiled in turn. There was still time for me to find an escort, and matters of engagement did not have to be settled anytime soon; I could wait until the balance of power had settled before making any concrete decisions. My sister and I each had unique hurdles to overcome as a consequence of the drastic change in the duchy's political state, so I understood her feelings of remorse well.

Though that is not to say the balance of power may not change yet again right after my own marriage...

Faction politics were decided by the aub and those around him. All we could do was move with the waves and strive to secure as solid a position for ourselves as possible.

We quietly sipped our tea, feeling bad for one another. Neither of us elected to speak, but our silence was not an awkward one; rather, it was one of compassion, as we each gave the other time to calm down.

“Christel, please do tell me about the harspiel assembly,” my sister asked again, setting down her cup and smiling as if attempting to wash away the previous mood. “At a tea party yesterday, there was a woman who proudly spoke of everything there having been fresh and new. The others who attended all expressed fevered agreement, and yet no one would explain what fresh, new things they were referring to. Is that not cruel?”

The tea party my sister spoke of was one attended primarily by those who had also attended the harspiel assembly, so she had ended up feeling extremely alone. This news did not come as much of a surprise—both Lady Helmina and I would admittedly become just as heated with excitement when we recalled Lord Ferdinand playing the harspiel, and there had been so many novel aspects to the tea party that those not in the know would struggle to comprehend even simplified explanations.

“I can hardly blame those other women. There was so much at the tea party that even those of us who were in attendance still do not understand. I am not sure how I could even begin to describe them in a way that would make sense to an outsider.”

“Oh my. You are saying exactly what they said,” my sister commented with an exaggerated frown. A chuckle escaped me.

“It’s true. Words alone struggle to suffice, and there is much we are obligated to keep secret from those who did not attend. There are a few examples here within our home that I could show you, however. Perhaps those will be easier for you to understand...?”

I instructed my attendant to retrieve my box, inside of which were all the treasures I had obtained during that sacred tea party. The first item I took out

was one half of a ticket.

“Unlike most tea parties, we did not receive invitations; instead, we needed to purchase these things called ‘tickets’ to participate,” I explained. “We were shown a list of seats and allowed to choose where we wished to sit, rather than the organizer directing us.”

My sister listened to me with wide eyes, finding each revelation more shocking than the last. “Does that mean seats were decided with no consideration of status and faction?” she asked, a hand over her mouth.

“Indeed. The tickets were separated into tiers based on price, and one could sit in any of the seats assigned to their particular tier. The seats closer to where Lord Ferdinand was playing were more expensive, and those farther away were cheaper.”

The seating chart had also contained the names of those who had already purchased their tickets, so one could even intentionally avoid those they did not want to be near. It truly was a remarkable idea.

“According to Lady Helmina, Lady Florencia took a seat far from the stage to emphasize that one could sit wherever they liked. Her table had only members from her own faction, but at a neighboring table sat members of another faction, and they did seem to greet and frequently converse with one another.”

Mother and I had purchased our tickets somewhat late, so we had been unable to sit close to Lady Florencia. Instead, we had taken Lady Helmina’s offer for us to buy seats next to hers, allowing us the opportunity to listen to the music together.

“If attendees were able to sit wherever they pleased, were there many members of the Veronica faction near the front...?”

“For this performance, Lady Elvira made sure to position Leisegang nobles at the front so that Lord Ferdinand would not be disturbed.”

“That is a relief,” my sister said with a smile. “Lord Ferdinand received such poor treatment from Lady Veronica. It is good to know he was shown such consideration.”

Despite being an archduke candidate, Lord Ferdinand had been cruelly

antagonized even while attending the Royal Academy, having to endure the students and their attendants following Lady Veronica's orders. My sister was familiar with many incidents that had resulted from this, and she was relieved to know Lady Elvira had taken action to protect him.

"Upon our arrival at the tea party, attendants checked our tickets and guided us to our chosen seats. They then cut our tickets in half, see? Look along this edge here." I wasn't sure why they had opted to take one half of our tickets, but they had.

"Sweets called 'cookies' and 'pound cakes' were served at the harspiel assembly," I continued. "Lady Rozemyne created the recipes for both, and they have been making frequent appearances at tea parties hosted by members of the Lady Florencia faction."

"I am told they are quite unique and delicious," my sister said with a wistful sigh.

I chuckled mischievously as I took out a bundle of cloth. "In here are cookies made with tea leaves, said to be Lord Ferdinand's personal preference. They were sold after the performance as souvenirs. Would you care to try one?"

I took one of the carefully preserved cookies and handed it to my sister. She looked at it with great interest before taking a small, swift bite.

"This sweetness is... sugar, perhaps?" she asked. "It is not too sweet though. I feel as though I could eat these forever."

"That faint sweetness goes perfectly with the crisp, crunchy texture, wouldn't you agree? I find myself reaching for them more often than I would care to admit, but I am careful to pace myself such that I might savor the memories of the day."

I picked up a cookie for myself and placed it on my plate. Despite my best efforts to savor the taste, it was gone in no time at all. I was taking care to eat only one a day, but there were already but two cookies remaining.

"The harspiel playing of that day flashes through my mind whenever I eat one of these cookies," I noted. "I have an important ritual for consuming them."

"Oh? Please do elaborate," my sister said, looking at me with amusement.

I next took the programming sheet out from the box. The front was decorated with an illustration of an unusual style that relied on thick black lines and white space, creating an image of a man playing the harspiel. Beneath him were the names of the songs that had been played on that day, as well as their lyrics. My sister frowned a little as her eyes ran across the page.

“Sister, this here ‘programming’ lists all the songs that were played at the event,” I explained. “Many sheets identical to this were made to market a new for-profit industry known as ‘printing.’ I always gaze upon the lyrics written upon this sheet while eating the cookies, replaying the recital in my mind.” I closed my eyes, recalling the heavenly notes of the harspiel as the sweetness of the cookie danced across my palate.

“I don’t believe I recognize any of these songs...”

“Observe the name of the composer. ‘Lady Rozemyne’ is written for each one, see?”

“Lady Rozemyne composed them, while Lord Ferdinand and... *Rosina* arranged them? Who is this ‘Rosina’?”

“Lady Rozemyne’s personal musician, I presume. These are most likely songs that Lady Rozemyne asked her musician to compose.” It was hard to imagine someone as young as her composing this many songs; it made far more sense to assume she was receiving credit for the work of her musician. That was not particularly uncommon.

“With the expectations these songs and sweets are no doubt going to create, I expect Lady Rozemyne is going to be under a lot of pressure during her debut,” I said. “I must say though, they were all quite excellent. This one in particular—this love song dedicated to Geduldh—practically exuded artistic talent.”

“Lord Ferdinand played a love song? I truly would have loved to hear that. Back in the Royal Academy I had resorted to sneakily eavesdropping while he practiced, but even then, his playing was so masterful that my heart swooned with each strum.”

My sister had attended the Royal Academy alongside Lord Ferdinand, meaning she had listened to his playing before, but the harspiel assembly was my first time. It was there that I was immediately convinced he had received a

blessing from Kunstzeal the Goddess of Art. There was no other way to explain the divinity with which he played.

“A great number of magic tools were used so that Lord Ferdinand’s voice reverberated throughout the hall. I speak with all honesty when I say it felt as though he were whispering directly into my ear. I could see the Goddesses of Spring dancing before my very eyes. I imagine many even felt the arrival of Bluanfah the Goddess of Sprouts.”

“I know the feeling well. He truly does have the playing skills to entice even a princess,” my sister said, nodding to herself and laughing.

“I cannot say whether it was due to the romantic nature of the song or Lord Ferdinand’s sultry voice, but women were falling unconscious on the spot. Keep this between us, but Mother was no exception.”

“Truly?”

“Yes. Also, while our reason for attending was to change our faction, we spent far too much money. Mother was not very motivated at first, but by the end of the love song... both she and I had more or less collapsed upon our table. We were in such a state that we were almost escorted out by the knights. It was only because we rushed to compose ourselves and professed that we were fine that they allowed us to stay.” I then went on to explain how a number of women hadn’t been quite so fortunate, ultimately needing to be carried from the venue.

My sister gave me an exasperated look. “To think she would faint in such a public place...”

It was an embarrassing failure for a proper lady, but no woman who had participated would ever describe this particular fainting spell as such. The air carried such intense excitement that not a soul could be blamed for passing out.

“It truly was a special time,” I said. “Everyone resorted to gripping an empty feystone beneath the table to contain their storm of emotions. I myself was surprised to find that I was impassioned enough to fill my feystone entirely.”

We all carried empty feystones for matters of emergency, but it was rare for a person to actually find the need to use one. It was standard to simply contain

one’s storm of emotions with the mind.

“I now see why those of us who did not participate struggle to understand...” my sister said.

The harspiel assembly had not been a standard affair during which everyone put on a polite facade; it was a gathering where the attendees wore their hearts on their sleeves, exposing their feelings to the world. It was hard to explain this to those who had not participated, because doing so was the same as exposing one’s embarrassing history. Only those who had shared the joy of the heated event could understand and talk about it at length.

“Toward the end, the aub rushed over and played the harspiel alongside Lord Ferdinand. It was my first time hearing him play also, and I must say, he was very good. The music became heavier and fancier with them both playing at once. They played a well-known sehrhymne and we all sang along. It felt as though all the attendees became one in that moment, united in our excitement. I wish to experience it again one day, if possible.”

“And now I wish to as well...” my sister said with an envious sigh.

“Ahaha. Allow me to show you something else, dear sister, that I would show to no other. These too must remain known only to those who participated, and they are my treasures.” I took out another bundle of cloth from the box and slowly unwrapped it.

“Oh my! These are illustrations of Lord Ferdinand! What is the meaning of this?! Should Lady Veronica hear about these, our house will...! Ah, yes. She is gone now.”

My sister gazed upon the illustrations, unable to contain the smile that had risen on her face. I knew well that my sister had admired Lord Ferdinand from afar when they attended the Royal Academy.

She would tell me about him quite regularly, speaking at immense length of his skill with the harspiel and his awe-inspiring ditter victories.

“These illustrations were created with the new printing technology I mentioned. They are amazing—beautiful, even—wouldn’t you agree? They capture Lord Ferdinand impeccably, whether it be his perfect eyes, his

inquisitive brow, or his countless other handsome features. I have recalled the recital in my mind countless times while gazing upon these."

I set the three illustrations down on the table, taking care not to crease or dirty them. I had ordered ornate frames so that I could display them around our home, but the order would take some time to finish. I needed to treasure and preserve them until then.

"Lady Helmina informed me about this; it seems printing is a new technology that can produce exact copies of documents," I said. "I was very impressed when I saw so many copies of the same document, but I originally did not understand the value in pushing the industry to the point that donations were required to sustain it."

When Lady Helmina had purchased the programming before the recital, I thought only that if one wanted copies of the same document, they could simply hire as many scholars as necessary.

"Indeed. Printing may be useful now while we are suffering from a shortage of personnel, but when there are more scholars, one would need only procure their services. Is this not stealing work from layscholars lacking in mana?"

Unlike my sister, I had not thought to consider the laynobles, but I imagined many other nobles also failed to see the point in spending so much on the printing industry.

"When I saw these illustrations after watching Lord Ferdinand perform, however, I stopped thinking that way. Being able to produce so many exact copies of something is of the utmost importance. No scholar would be able to perfectly reproduce this illustration, no?"

Ordering art would usually result in a significant waiting period, and the artist could not sell copies of the same picture to multiple people at once. And yet, so many of us sharing the same illustration was superb. It emphasized our shared memories.

"In short, there are many copies of these illustrations," my sister said.

"Indeed. One hundred perfect copies of each illustration were sold at the tea party, all made by printing. As I'm sure you can guess, they all sold out."

My sister longingly gazed upon the illustrations on the table before looking up at me with a steely expression. “Christel, please do give me one,” she said. “Then I will also be able to join the discussions at tea parties.”

“I am afraid I cannot do that, dear sister.”

“But you have three! Can you truly not part with just one? I too yearn for an illustration of Lord Ferdinand.”

I knew well that my sister had flushed for Lord Ferdinand back in her Royal Academy days, and one of these illustrations would prove a valuable weapon for her to participate in tea party discussions, despite her having been unable to attend the harspiel assembly herself. However, the three illustrations sitting atop the table were all unique, and I had promised Mother that I would preserve them until the frames arrived. It was not my place to lend them without permission, and given how sharply Mother’s eyes had gleamed when she battled the crowd to purchase them, it was hard to imagine she would ever allow them to leave the estate.

“I am keeping these safe for Mother, so I cannot give them away to anyone, not even you. Each one cost five large silvers.”

“Five large silvers for an illustration lacking color...? I am surprised Father would allow Mother to purchase not just one, but three.”

“He was furious, of course. He could not believe she would spend so much at a single tea party. Mother was only able to calm him by saying it was a necessary cost to shift our faction to more stable territory,” I explained. Father was the one who had ordered Mother to attend the tea party in the first place, so he had not been able to argue any further.

“Oh my. But does that argument carry weight when one remembers that Mother grew heated enough to fall unconscious?”

“My my... That is a secret between you and me, dear sister. Recall that I gifted you one of my precious cookies. Those were available for purchase only at the harspiel assembly.”

My sister gave a sigh that was equal parts impressed and exasperated. She went to speak, only to be interrupted as an ordonnanz flew into the room.

“Who could this be...?” I wondered aloud.

The ordonnanz flew around the room once before settling in front of me. “Lady Christel, it’s Helmina,” came a bright, excited voice. “Lady Elvira is holding a tea party ten days from now to discuss the harspiel assembly. She said to invite all those who bought copies of each of the illustrations. Please do join us; it will be a positively splendid occasion.”

The bird repeated its message three times before reverting into a yellow feystone, which then clattered onto the table.

“You earned Lady Elvira’s invitation by purchasing all of the illustrations...?” my sister asked, her mouth agape. “I suppose Father truly cannot scold Mother for it.”

I nodded. “Sister, I will attempt to persuade Lady Elvira and the others as best I can. Perhaps they will hold another harspiel assembly.”

“Christel, I would not be able to attend without permission from my husband. I ask only that you see whether they can arrange for those like me to purchase the illustrations independently.”

Ten days after that lively tea party with my sister, I attended another tea party with Mother, this one hosted by Lady Elvira. Our intention was not only to discuss the harspiel performance, however; we were gathering to extol Lord Ferdinand for all his virtues. It was an irreplaceably delightful time during which we all reminisced and allowed our fervent excitement to show. It was only natural then that there would be calls for another harspiel assembly to be held.

Upon seeing our enthusiasm, however, Lady Elvira’s expression clouded over, and she looked across us all with sorrow in her eyes. “I regret this more than anyone, but I cannot hold another recital, nor can I sell any more illustrations of Lord Ferdinand,” she announced.

Lady Elvira went on to report that she had received Lord Ferdinand’s assistance under the promise that it would be a one-time event. To make matters worse, Aub Ehrenfest had leaked to him the existence of the illustrations, which in turn caused Lord Ferdinand to forbid Lady Rozemyne from ever printing them again.

How terrible! To think we would be thrust into a pit of despair so soon after being taught the splendor of printing and donating so much!

It seemed that my feelings of displeasure toward Aub Ehrenfest would not be resolved anytime soon.

Feelings of Panic

(Told from Tuuli's perspective. Originally posted on *Bookworm*'s short story collection page on Narou.)

"Tuuli, I think it's about time for bed," Mom said as she laid out my covers.

"I'll sleep once I've finished this one," I replied, quickly but carefully crocheting one last red flower. I cut away the leftover thread and made a few final touches before setting aside my needle, leaning back, and stretching hard as I admired the finished decoration.

"You certainly have gotten busy now that you're a leherl," Mom noted.

"Myne's to blame for that," I said with pursed lips as I put my needle away in my toolbox.

Ever since I had started working for the Gilberta Company as a leherl apprentice, Mrs. Corinna and Mr. Otto began taking a bunch more orders for flower ornaments. Myne had apparently done something during the Star Festival all the nobles went to, and out of nowhere, we had received a ton more customers. I'd thought that maybe Lady Brigitte's dress had been a big hit, but not many people were ordering clothes—just our flower ornaments.

As a hairpin maker, this meant I was super busy. There were other people in the workshop making flower ornaments, but I had the most experience and could make a wider variety of decorations, so most orders ended up going to me.

Myne was also giving me picture books and letters containing hidden messages about new ways to make lace and other things, and since nobody else knew the codes, I was naturally the first one to actually make them. I would learn the techniques myself, attempt to make the decorations, and then pass this information on to the others. In other words, I had ended up in a teaching position of sorts in the workshop.

While I was happy to have so much responsibility after fighting to secure my position as a leherl, all I ever did was make hairpins. I didn't feel like I was getting much better as a seamstress.

"I want to do more work with clothes..." I murmured. "I promised to make some for Myne, but all I'm making are hairpins."

"True," Mom replied. "But once you've learned some more etiquette, you'll start getting brought along to the noble estates for orders, right?"

"Yeah, but..."

I sighed. Etiquette was hard, and it was impossible to know where you needed to improve without someone else to guide you. To make matters worse, Lutz was getting better and better at carrying himself, and it was making me so jealous. We were supposed to be equals when it came to getting dragged around by Myne, but he was getting closer and closer to the nobility while I got stuck lagging behind.

This past summer, Lutz had gone to a far-off province called Illgner and stayed there until winter preparations started. He'd said that he was figuring out how to make new kinds of paper.

Anyway, super important nobles would soon be going to Illgner, so Lutz had to practice really advanced etiquette; the gray priests who served nobles taught everyone who went. I was busy with hairpins and didn't have teachers like that, so I thought it was kind of unfair.

"Why don't you have Lutz teach you?" Mom asked.

"He's busy... And that's Myne's fault too." He was constantly running between the ink and carpentry workshops, since he'd brought back a ton of things from Illgner for them to experiment with. "Kamil's lucky. Myne gives him toys, not work."

Lutz had recently delivered a new toy Myne had ordered from a carpentry workshop: a box with holes of various shapes cut into the thin board on top, and some blocks that were designed to fit through them. Each block could only be pushed through a certain hole, and while Kamil had only managed to figure out the circle one so far, he loved playing with it anyway.

Kamil really liked Lutz, since he was the one who always brought him toys. If things continued like this, I half-expected Kamil to end up as an apprentice at the Plantin Company with Lutz's introduction.

"Hey, Mom... Do you think Kamil's also going to live his whole life being dragged around by Myne?"

"Maybe, but that'll be his decision to make. You're doing this because you want to, right? I mean, what you're making there... That's a winter hairpin for Myne, isn't it?" Mom asked, pointing at the red flower on the table.

She was right on the money. I faltered a little as I delicately picked up the decoration. "Myne hasn't sent any new orders, even though the season's about to change... What else can I do but make something for her and take it to her directly? She's the archduke's daughter now; it'd be shameful if she wore the same hairpin every year. I need to make sure she doesn't embarrass herself."

"Why not just admit you want to see her again?" Mom asked with a chuckle. I puffed out my cheeks in response.

Myne's been so busy lately. I can't just say I want to see her for my own sake.

I couldn't help but wonder if she didn't actually care about seeing me. Maybe she loved her noble family more than us now. It was hard to admit that I wanted to see her when my thoughts kept straying in that direction.

I picked up the rest of the half-completed hairpin. There was a feeling of unease in my chest, but I shrugged it off and gave Mom a small smile. "I just want Myne to be healthy again," I said. "You know, Lutz mentioned she found all the ingredients for her medicine."

"Right... Myne will finally be healthy again..." Mom said. She wore a conflicted smile, looking both happy and sad, and I completely understood why. We were both so glad about Myne getting better, but as she moved even further beyond being the sickly, always-collapsing girl we knew, we felt as though we were being left behind.

Myne... Don't go too far just yet... I thought, caressing the red decorative flower in my hand. *I still need to become a first-rate seamstress.*

The Start of Life as a Retainer

(An original short story written for this fanbook.)

"Lady Brunhilde, Lady Rozemyne is inquiring as to your interest in serving as her retainer," Rihyarda said. "I must note, she was raised in the temple and has only recently awoken from a two-year slumber, so she is lacking in ways that are unthinkable for most nobles. Compensating for this will place a considerable burden on all her retainers. Even knowing this, would you be willing to serve as her apprentice attendant?"

Rihyarda served as Lady Rozemyne's head attendant, and she had come to me with this inquiry the day Lady Rozemyne arrived at the Royal Academy. It honestly came as quite the relief; I had worried that I had come on too strongly when welcoming Lady Rozemyne, especially considering that Lieseleta had felt it necessary to step in.

"I have long awaited Lady Rozemyne's awakening. My father even said that if I am to serve anyone, it should be her."

"Oh my. That is very much like Giebe Groschel."

Due to having been constrained by Lady Veronica in the past, the Leisegang nobles had selected Lady Rozemyne—the daughter of Lord Karstedt and Lady Elvira—as the archduke candidate their faction would support. I had a deep connection with the Leisegangs as the daughter of Giebe Groschel, and my father had explicitly ordered me to support her.

I had also been instructed to discover the aub's reason for abruptly adopting Lady Rozemyne, as well as why he had assigned Rihyarda, his own retainer, to serve as her head attendant instead of selecting a Leisegang noble or someone from Lord Bonifatius's family.

I imagine Father and the others are acting with the wisdom I lack, but...

In my opinion, it made far more sense to leave such stealthy intelligence

gathering to apprentice scholars such as Hartmut. I wanted only to grow close to Lady Rozemyne and assist her in spreading trends, such as her hairpins and new recipes, throughout the Sovereignty.

I have finally been given permission to begin circulating trends. The last thing I want is to waste what little time I have left in the Royal Academy on such political trivialities.

"I gladly accept, Lady Rihyarda."

"We shall now be serving the same lady, Brunhilde. You may call me just 'Rihyarda.'"

The rooms for retainers were located across from those of the archduke candidates, so I was instructed to move to my new accommodation.

"I see these are designed the same as archnoble rooms," I observed. It seemed that archnobles were so commonly taken as the retainers of archduke candidates that the interiors were fashioned with this in mind. The rooms were unusually large and decorated with furniture that was fancy by mednoble standards, although it was nothing new to me. I looked around, at which point Angelica came to summon me.

"You can leave your belongings to the servants and your own attendants," she said. "Please go greet Lady Rozemyne."

"Understood."

I gave instructions to my attendants and then stepped out into the corridor, where I found Lady Rozemyne's new retainers all gathered outside her room. Lieseleta, a fourth-year apprentice medattendant popular among other attendants for her careful work and refined demeanor, was busy speaking to Angelica. I had heard that she wished to serve Lady Rozemyne out of gratitude.

Her mother serves as an attendant to Lady Florencia, and her older sister Angelica is Lady Rozemyne's apprentice guard knight. At least in regard to faction politics, there is no need to be on guard against her.

Standing beside Angelica and enthusiastically listening to her conversation was Judithe, a violet-eyed girl in her second year. She was the daughter of a

knight who guarded the country gate in Kirnberger. I had heard she was especially well trained as a knight for someone her age, and that she was aiming to join Lady Rozemyne's retainers out of admiration for Angelica.

Kirnberger isn't particularly close to the former Veronica faction, so she should not necessitate too much caution either.

"Philine, you were chosen too? I'm glad we get to work together!" Judithe exclaimed, her excitement clear in her voice.

"You wrote stories for Lady Rozemyne's sake the entire time she was asleep. I'm happy for you," Lieseleta added, gesturing Philine over with a kind smile.

Philine hesitantly walked over, fearful due to being a mere first-year layscholar. Back in the playroom, she was said to have not been confirmed as a retainer, but perhaps Lady Rozemyne had forced the matter despite her advisers' concerns.

First Damuel, now Philine. Lady Rozemyne certainly seems to take whomever she pleases as her retainers, regardless of status.

Lady Rozemyne was naturally free to choose anyone she pleased, but there were many who wished to be the retainer of an archducal family member; more than a few students were no doubt displeased with a laynoble being chosen in their place. If we fellow retainers did not protect her with great care, Philine would certainly be crushed. She was simply too young and of too low a status to protect herself.

That said... is Lady Rozemyne not meant to be a beacon of hope for the Leisegang faction?

I saw no Leisegang faces among her new retainers. That was not to say she lacked other Leisegang retainers entirely, considering that her brother Cornelius was among her guard knights, but still. Was it overthinking things to view this selection as an attempt to somewhat distance herself from the Leisegangs?

"Oh my. Am I late?" came a voice from behind. I turned and saw Leonore, a fourth-year knight, striding over. I sighed in relief. She was a Leisegang noble, much like myself, meaning I had an ally after all.

"I see you have been chosen as well, Leonore."

“Indeed. I hope we can use this opportunity to grow even closer,” she replied. We had spent much time together due to being of similar ages and our parents often visiting each other, so I was positively overjoyed that she was here as an apprentice guard knight.

“Lady Rozemyne, may I allow your retainers in?” Angelica asked, standing by the door. I heard Rozemyne reply “You certainly may” from somewhere inside, so we lined up in order of status and followed Angelica into the room.

Goodness! What a massive room!

Rozemyne's Own Tour!

This is my room!



Gallery

I've adorned the top of this short dresser with art and decorative lace. It's meant to display things I've made myself, yet when I suggested putting my books on there, Ferdinand called me a fool. Hmph!

Retainers' Room

In the castle, this is where my retainers can eat, work, and talk among themselves.

Dumbwaiter

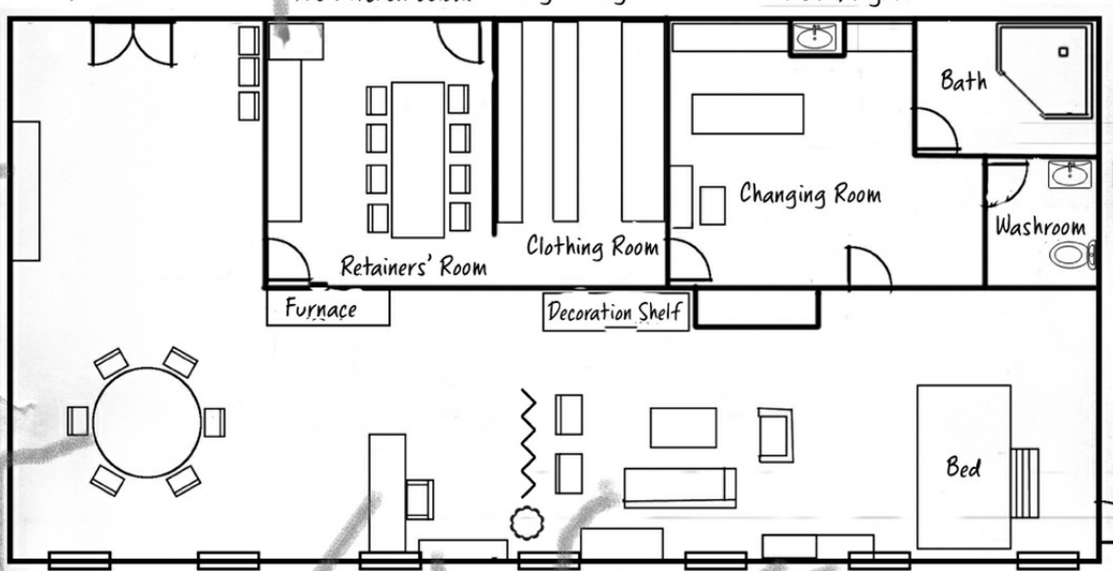
A small elevator used to transport food between the retainers' room and the kitchen below.

Clothing Room

I've never been in here myself, but this is where clothes, cloth, magic chess, and the like are fetched from. I assume it's like a big storage room.

Changing Room

This is where I wash my face, get changed, and prepare for the day. I'm the only one allowed to use this room; I'm not even permitted to let others use the toilet. Weird, right?



Study Desk

This is where I read the big books I get from the library. The chair and desk are a size meant for adults, though. I hope I get taller soon.

Bookshelf

This is where we put the books and documents I need for my work and studies. Rihyarda holds on to the key. I wish I had it.

Book Boxes

I wanted to move these between my bed and the hidden room for easy access, but I was told no. Talk about mean, right? I could actually cry.

Door to My Hidden Room

Hidden rooms are created using magic. Unlike my room in the temple, my rooms in the castle and the Royal Academy don't contain brewing materials, so they don't see much use.

Round Table

I normally eat at this table, but I also sit here when my retainers are helping me with something. This is where I had tea with Charlotte, and where we spoke about Wilfried.

Decoration Shelf

This is where my harspiel, flowers, fancy plates, and the like are kept. The harspiel certainly looks nice on display, but I'm not all that enthusiastic about having to practice it. Whenever I try to add books to this shelf, I'm told that there's no need, since I've got a dedicated bookshelf and my book boxes. They don't get that the more books there are, the better.

Bench

I would love to roll around on this while reading a book, but Rihyarda always gets mad and calls it unladylike. I'm not strong enough to bring heavy books most other places on my own, so I really wish she wasn't so against it. Tch...

Chairs

The two lined up are for harspiel practice, so they don't have any armrests. There's one for Rosina and one for me. There's another chair which does have armrests, and is used by the night watchmen.

It was my first time entering the personal room of an archducal family member, and the sheer size absolutely stunned me. It was hard to imagine this was all for a single person.

Chairs of identical design were lined up to the left of the entryway, likely used to accommodate additional guests during tea parties. The right wall was decorated with art and embroidered tapestries, pieces presumably made by Lady Rozemyne herself. She had already proven her musical talent during her debut, but it seemed she was an expert in even more regards. I let out a satisfied sigh as I recalled the music she had played and the spectacular blessing it had produced.

Just how much would she have grown had the sleep not taken those years from her? Truly a shame.

Lady Rozemyne was seated at the far end of a round table located directly in front of the door. She looked much too young to be attending the Royal Academy, and I instantly recalled when I had greeted her during her first winter playroom. She had hardly aged a day since then.

She was sitting on a cushion to put her at a reasonable height above the table, and the floor was but a distant dream for her feet. She looked so young and innocent that I was struck with the urge to give whomever had attacked her a firm telling off. She would struggle here with her youthful form, but we attendants would have quite a time ahead of us as well, since we needed to ensure she experienced no inconveniences while living here.

Though, naturally, I will accomplish that with aplomb.

With resolve in my heart, I knelt before Lady Rozemyne with all the beauty expected of a daughter of Giebe Groschel. “Lady Rozemyne, I am ever so delighted that you selected me. You may count on me to make your trends fashionable.”

“Indeed. I intend to rely on you quite heavily when it comes to social matters, Brunhilde.”

She not only praised my achievements when it came to researching trends, but also entrusted me with matters of socializing with other duchies. I was so

happy to have been given the job I wanted and to have been recognized for my efforts that I struggled to contain a grin.

My mind wandered to potential ways I could spread Ehrenfest trends throughout the Academy, and the next thing I knew, Lieseleta had finished her greetings as well.

“Milady, I will teach the two apprentice attendants about the work that needs to be done here,” Rihyarda said, briskly walking deeper into the room. We followed.

“Now then, I will explain Lady Rozemyne’s room and what you will be doing as apprentice attendants. It is structured the same as her room in the castle, though the furniture is a mishmash of what belonged to former candidates, so each part is a little different.”

It seemed most of the furniture being passed down was true for our rooms as well. A closer look revealed how seasoned many of the pieces were.

On the left wall of the main room was a furnace, and against the right were a bookshelf and a study desk. There was also a chair for practicing harspiel, a bench for lounging, and some shelves for decoration, as well as plants and a screen that seemed to hide a more private space. At the back was a bed large enough to fit Lady Rozemyne several times over. I couldn’t help but wonder just how many copies of her it could accommodate.

So the farther back one goes, the more personal the room becomes.

In which case, the circular table with chairs where Lady Rozemyne was currently sitting was not for lounging at, but was rather within the most public and formal area of the room. I turned around a bit.

“Rihyarda, I am aware the Royal Academy has rooms for tea parties, since those from other duchies cannot enter other dorms... but are tea parties ever held in the rooms of archduke candidates?” I asked.

“When Lady Charlotte begins attending the Academy next year, I imagine she and Lady Rozemyne will want to have tea parties together here. They are fairly close.”

I had been told that Lady Rozemyne was attacked on the night of Lady Charlotte's baptism ceremony, and she hadn't awoken until two years later at the end of autumn. When exactly had they had the opportunity to develop any sort of bond? Lady Rozemyne had hardly attended this year's winter playroom, so I had almost never seen them together.

"Here in the Royal Academy, the circular table is also used for Lady Rozemyne's retainers to give their reports, help her with classwork, and discuss preparations for any tea parties she is due to hold. Discussions which require male retainers are held in a meeting room on the first floor."

"Since you specified 'here in the Royal Academy,' does that mean the table has a different purpose in the castle?" I asked.

"We can discuss that when we return there."

It was true that we didn't need to know immediately. It was a matter that could wait. When I taught others, I often taught in order of immediate importance as well. As I nodded to myself, I noticed Lieseleta tilt her head.

"Is something the matter, Lieseleta?"

"Erm... I see the book boxes are by the bench, but is that not incorrect? I believe they are normally positioned closer to the studying desks," she said.

On closer examination, I also noticed the two book boxes placed between the bed and the bench. They were blunt, crude boxes that stood out amid the colorful red and pink of the lounge area.

Rihyarda glanced over at Lady Rozemyne and shook her head. "They are where they need to be," she said with a sigh. "It seems that milady cannot properly relax without a book in her hands. She spends almost all of her free time reading, but also completely loses sight of her surroundings in the process, so I manage the keys to the boxes and to her bookshelf. It is important to lock them after seventh bell, for she will never sleep otherwise."

I had heard of archduke candidates being encouraged to read, but this was my first time hearing of one who needed to have their reading time limited. Judging from what Lady Rihyarda had said, I could guess that Lady Rozemyne's love for books was intense enough to negatively impact her life.

Speaking of which... I do recall her flipping through outrageously thick books in the children's playroom. At the time, I had assumed this was to show she was learning alongside the others despite having already finished her studies, but it turned out she just loved to read.

"Behind the bed is the door to her hidden room. We will enter it only when we are invited inside to clean."

I nodded, looking up at the bed. It was fairly old with thick curtains around it, and the bedding was covered in beautiful embroidery. It took only a glance to know it was of a much higher quality than what archnobles used.

"This is the changing room, where she will wash her hands, and there you see a door leading to the bath. The green feystone pitcher you see by the washbasin is connected to the basement's water container. You will pour water into the bath with this, then warm it with the blue feystone. These are magic tools for exclusive use in the bath."

"I have learned about these in class, but Brunhilde is a third-year, so she has not yet..."

"It is fine, Lieseleta. I have similar tools in my home and am familiar with their usage."

While there was a notable difference in size, the changing room and such functioned just as they did in my estate. Lieseleta would most likely struggle with this more than I would, considering how her family shared their bath, washbasin, and the like.

"The necessary tools for bathing are all contained within this box," Rihyarda said. "Be sure to return them when the hot water has been prepared."

I was aware Lady Rozemyne had invented rinsham, and I was pleasantly surprised to see a jar of it carrying a scent I was unfamiliar with. The recipe had most likely been prepared specially for her. As my heart thumped with joy at being in the presence of such a cutting-edge product, I confirmed the locations of the laundry baskets and massage oils.

"Please put the laundry into this basket with the blue tag. When she has finished changing in the morning, send her used clothes down to the basement

via the dumbwaiter so that the servants below may clean them. Her changes of clothes are in the clothing room."

The clothing room had rows of shelves stretching all the way to the back wall. There were underclothes, overclothes, shoes, accessories, and extra cloth for repairing any tears.

"Her Royal Academy clothes are stored here, as are class-specific clothes like her riding outfit," Rihyarda said, beginning to gesture to particular shelves. "Her normal clothes are here. Special outfits for socializing are here as well, just in case. Bedding is over here. Sewing tools and irons are on this shelf. Please wear these aprons when preparing the bath and working with water."

It seemed our work tools were kept in the clothing room as well. Lady Rozemyne's things were kept separate from our attendant things, so we would not struggle to distinguish them.

"This is the area for tools," Rihyarda explained as she entered a space connected to the clothing room. The first thing I saw inside was a sizable table. "It is nearly identical to the one in the castle so as to make my work easier. Please return any tools you use to the exact place you find them."

"This is the retainers' room," she continued. "It is where we discuss matters among ourselves, do work that we do not wish for our lady to see, and generally keep in contact. The shelves store not just dishes, but also sweets and tea for our lady. You may use this table for a bit of mending or rest when necessary." She then opened a cabinet to show us the tea-making tools, going on to describe which tea Lady Rozemyne preferred.

I see. She prefers a two-to-one ratio of teegabt to ergey, with a sizable quantity of grauvache milk.

"The cart used to carry the tea is here. This here is the dumbwaiter I mentioned earlier, which is used to exchange goods with the servants in the basement. Once the laundry has been placed in the blue-tagged basket, pour mana into this to send it down. It will return with clean laundry by sixth bell. When you want water heated, send it down with this tag. It will return once heated, and then you can use this blue feystone pitcher to pour the tea. Use this tag when you need sweets."

After explaining all the different tag colors and shapes so that we could use the dumbwaiter properly, Rihyarda unlocked a particular cabinet with a key.

“This is where milady’s potions are stored. My boy Ferdinand has entrusted me with managing these, so speak to me whenever milady looks ill. This is a list of warnings I was given when I first began serving her. Look over it later when you have the time.”

“Understood.”

I quickly skimmed the wooden board of warnings and discovered it was filled to the brim with arcane instructions regarding limiting her reading time and enforcing ideal exercise. The details were so precise I found myself at a loss for words, whereas Lieseleta peered over at the board with a small smile on her face.

“You may read it first, Brunhilde. My sister has spoken a bit of Lady Rozemyne’s ill health. She has restrictions even for tea parties.”

“I see I have much to learn before socializing with the other duchies begins...”

The box of potions was considerably large. It likely contained more than they expected to use, but still, there was an impressive amount inside. I recalled the potions I had prepared for myself prior to leaving and truly came to understand just how poor Lady Rozemyne’s health was.

“Apprentice attendants wake up at first bell and dress themselves. Breakfast is held at second bell, so we must prepare milady for the day before then. Begin by cleaning her room lightly with magic tools. By the time you are finished, her guard knights will have gathered themselves in the retainers’ room, and you may confirm among yourselves which classes you each need to attend and who is going to be guarding her that day. Once that is done, you will wake her up.”

Lady Rozemyne had been strictly instructed not to leave her bed before being summoned by her attendants. Because of this, when she had a book she strongly wanted to read, she would hide it in a desk drawer or under her pillow in advance, or even start reading it early in the morning.

Just how much does she love books...? I wondered. All of the work-related concerns Rihyarda had discussed seemed to be related to Lady Rozemyne’s ill

health and obsession with reading.

“You all should know the flow of morning preparations, as all noblewomen share the same general process. Once those have been completed, it is time for breakfast. While we would wait for her to finish eating and then have her leftovers in the castle, here in the Royal Academy, we eat alongside her in the dining hall. When I say to clean up the baskets, you must swiftly go from the changing room, through the clothing room, and into the retainers’ room to do just that. You must then return to her main room and gather in front of the door, where your attendants will be.”

Rihyarda would check Lady Rozemyne in the mirror, and we would prepare to leave for the dining hall until they were ready. We would then briefly commune with our attendants to ensure maximum grace.

“Following breakfast, we prepare for classes and move to the common room. This is when milady begins to read, and taking her to classes becomes quite the challenge. Please take care to ensure she can socialize with other students in the common room. Given that milady has such poor health and has spent two years asleep, she has overwhelmingly fewer connections than others.”

“It is true that she will need to socialize with other Ehrenfest students before she can begin thinking about socializing with other duchies,” I replied. She had spent a full winter with the first-, second-, and third-years in the playroom, but no more than ten days with the older students before they departed for the Royal Academy.

“Brunhilde, is it not first necessary for Lady Rozemyne to grow familiar with her retainers?” Lieseleta asked. “We are almost all new faces to her. I am sure she will struggle to relax in her room before she properly comes to know us.”

I nodded empathetically. I also struggled to relax in my room following a change of attendants; much time would pass with us searching each other out, not quite being on the same page and experiencing minor emotional disturbances. I would go into my hidden room when necessary to calm myself, but I would not have been able to grow used to them had I remained locked away forever.

On top of that, Lady Rozemyne had more retainers than I did, so she would

take even longer to adjust than I normally would. Out of all her retainers, only Rihyarda, Cornelius, and Angelica had served her prior to her coming to the Royal Academy.

“She will likely grow accustomed to you faster than she will me, Lieseleta, for you look quite like Angelica,” I said. “Perhaps you and Rihyarda can handle duties which require touching her, while I focus on cleaning and preparing tea, among other minor duties?”

“Very well,” Lieseleta replied. “You have been entrusted with matters of socialization, Brunhilde, so please focus your efforts on that. An archnoble will accomplish much more there than a mednoble such as myself ever could.”

As Lieseleta and I decided our respective shares of the work, Rihyarda clapped her hands together. “I am glad to see you working together as good friends, but my explanation comes first. Do not forget to change into your attendant work clothes after returning from your classes. From there, Lady Rozemyne will change into her lounging clothes. You will then have free time until dinner.”

While she described it as free time, there would not be all that long between us finishing our classes and dinner starting.

“Following dinner you will prepare the bath. Some will then help her bathe while others prepare the bed. Oh yes, and do not forget to ask her which massage oils she wishes to use before she enters the bath; her preferences vary based on her mood. Once she exits the bath, one attendant will massage her, while another cleans the bath and prepares tea. Apprentices may leave once Lady Rozemyne has finished bathing.”

After her bath, Lady Rozemyne would drink tea, read, and then study for the next day’s classes until it was time for bed.

“You both have experience as attendants, so I will not be too strict with how you spend your free time or when you sleep,” Rihyarda concluded. “Just ensure you rest enough that it does not interfere with your work the next day.”

“Understood.”

“That is how Rihyarda explained Lady Rozemyne’s daily schedule to us when

we first arrived, but...” I trailed off, picking up my cup and looking at Lieseleta. She took a leftover cookie and gave a refined laugh.

“Few things go according to plan, do they? Perhaps the castle is different.”

“It must be. There is no library there, so there is no need for her to pull out all the stops.”

Due to the Better Grades Committee and a few careless words from Lord Wilfried, Lady Rozemyne had woken up earlier than her attendants to begin writing out worksheets, among other things. In addition to that, a tea party with the music professors had been scheduled before we could even finish carefully reading the instructions Lord Ferdinand had given us. Everything was an enormous mess to say the least, and I was being dragged around so much that I could feel my skill as an attendant climbing dramatically by the day.

“Lady Rozemyne is about to finish her classes soon, yes? I cannot believe she has such incredible focus.”

“Indeed. She needs retainers to accompany her to the library, so we are being quite rushed ourselves.”

Lieseleta and I exchanged a chuckle, sipping tea and sharing a break in the retainers’ room while Lady Rozemyne and Philine dedicated themselves to making study resources at the circular table. Her stay at the Royal Academy had only just begun.

Ascendance of a Bookworm

Drama CD Recording Report

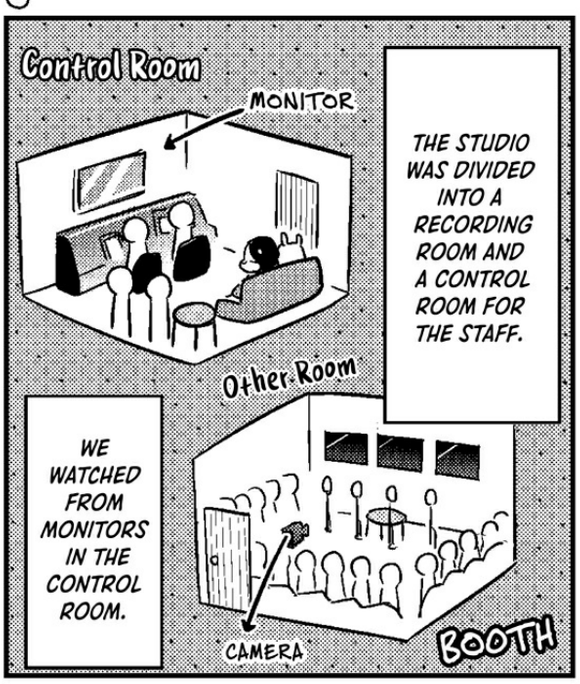
By Suzuka

ATTENTION ALL READERS

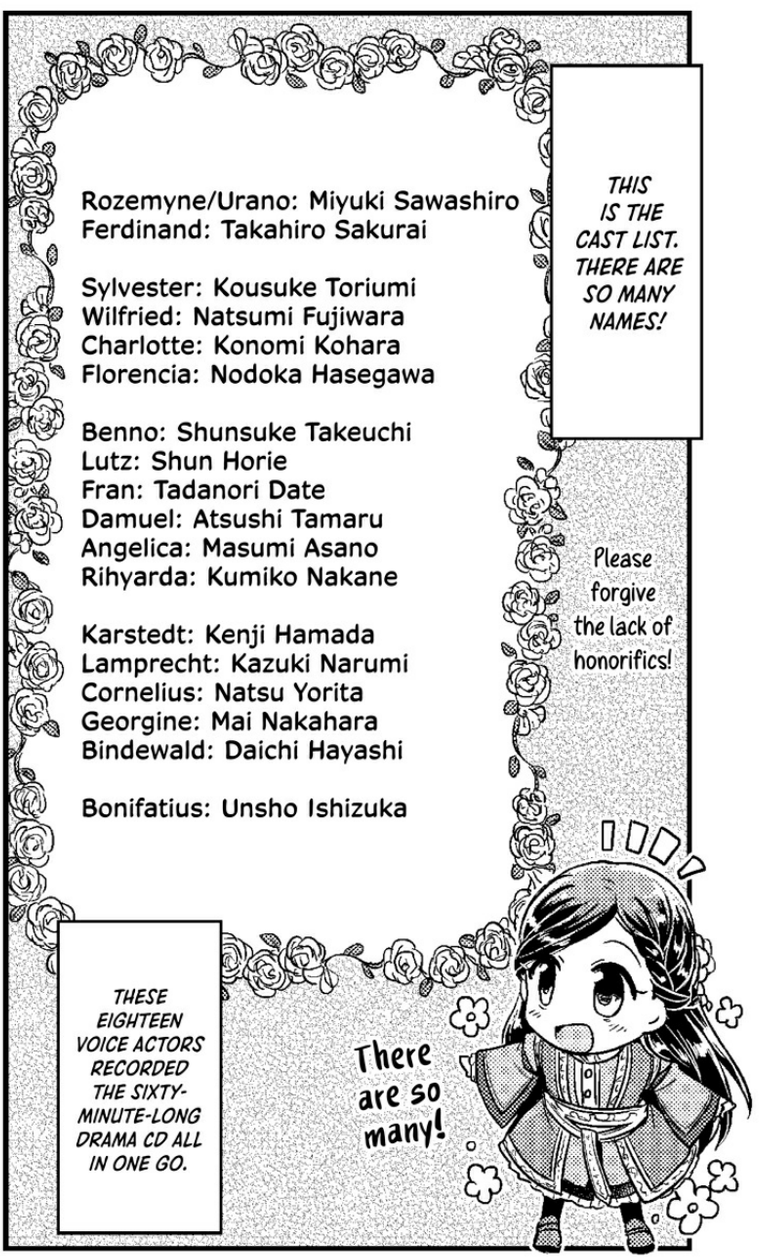
This portion of the fanbook contains spoilers for Part 3 of Ascendance of a Bookworm. Please keep this in mind before proceeding.

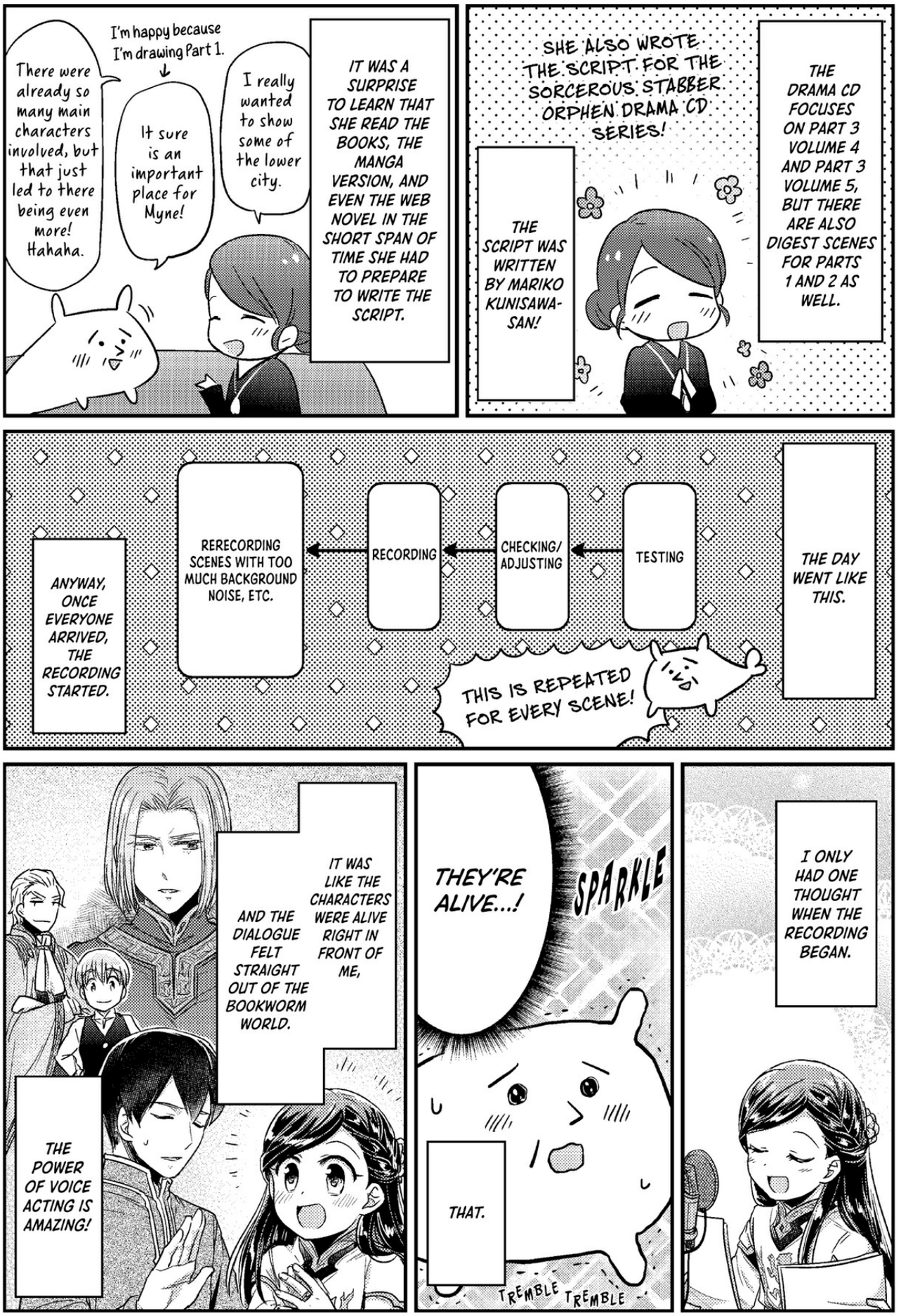


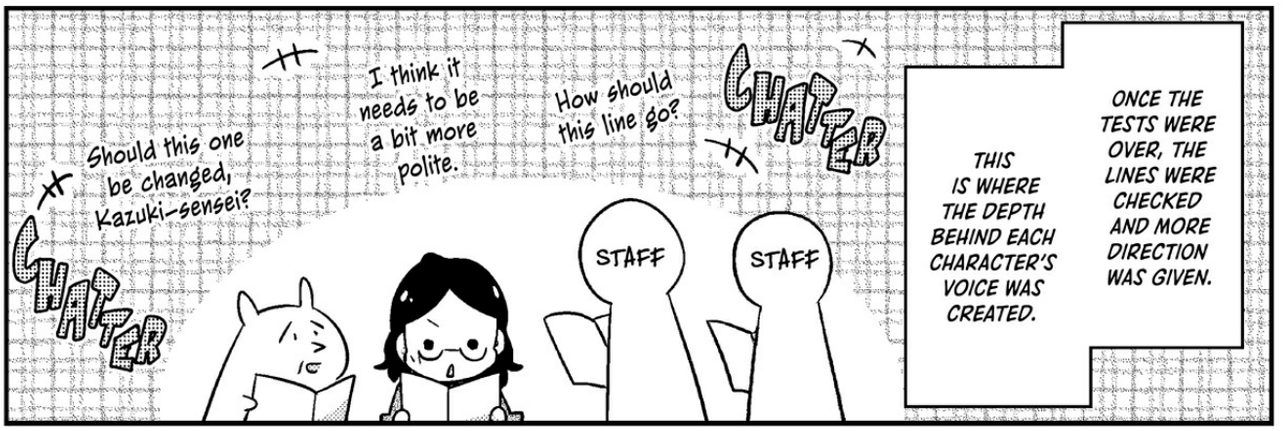

Ascendance of a Bookworm
Drama CD Recording Report
By Suzuka
I PARTICIPATED IN THE RECORDING SESSION FOR ASCENDANCE OF A BOOKWORM'S FIRST DRAMA CD!
MIYA KAZUKI
YIPPEE!
SUZUKA
MAY XX 2017

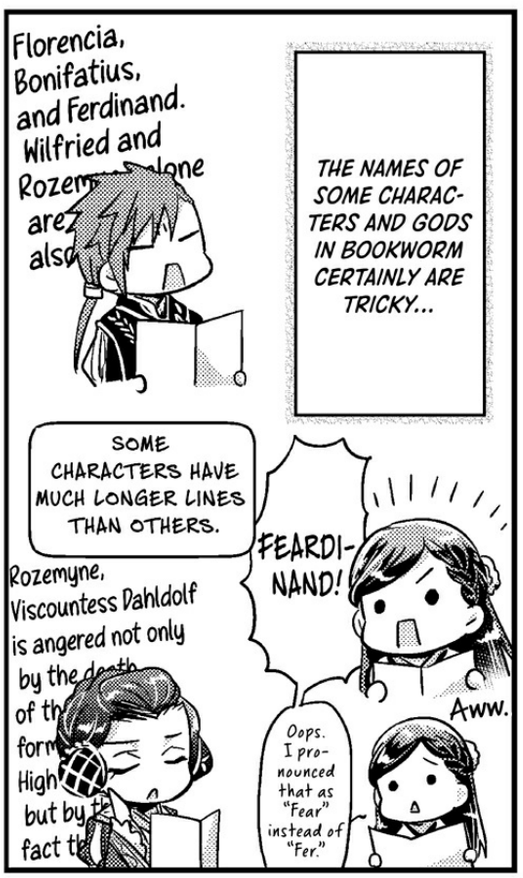

Control Room
MONITOR
THE STUDIO WAS DIVIDED INTO A RECORDING ROOM AND A CONTROL ROOM FOR THE STAFF.
Other Room
WE WATCHED FROM MONITORS IN THE CONTROL ROOM.
CAMERA
BOOTH

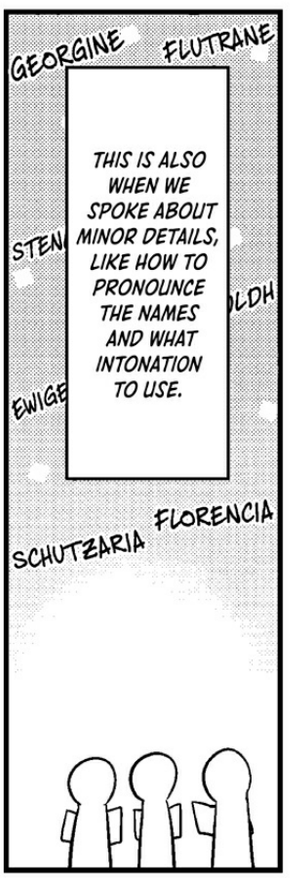

No, no! X-san hasn't come back yet!
NG
IT WAS REALLY HEARTWARMING TO SEE TORIUMI-SAN WAVING HIS HANDS AT THE CAMERA DURING BREAKS AND SAWASHIRO-SAN SENDING US HAND SIGNALS.
WAVE
OK
We're all good now!

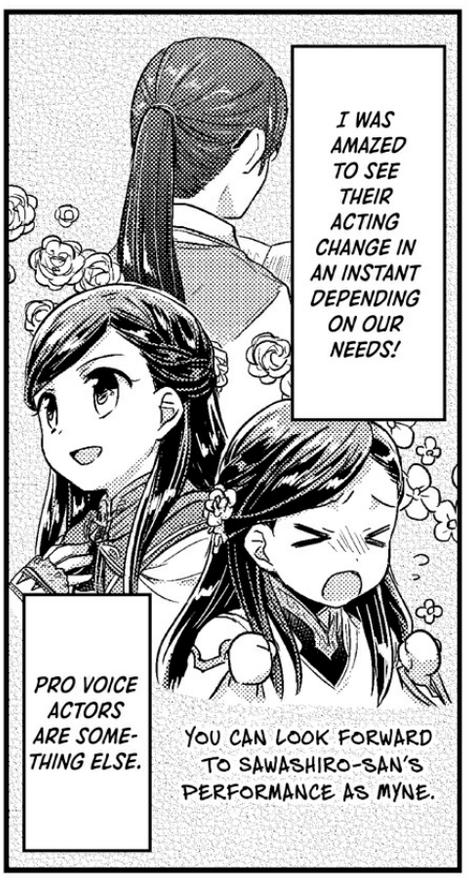

Rozemyne/Urano: Miyuki Sawashiro
Ferdinand: Takahiro Sakurai
Sylvester: Kousuke Toriumi
Wilfried: Natsumi Fujiwara
Charlotte: Konomi Kohara
Florencia: Nodoka Hasegawa
Benno: Shunsuke Takeuchi
Lutz: Shun Horie
Fran: Tadanori Date
Damuel: Atsushi Tamaru
Angelica: Masumi Asano
Rihyarda: Kumiko Nakane
Karstedt: Kenji Hamada
Lamprecht: Kazuki Narumi
Cornelius: Natsu Yorita
Georgine: Mai Nakahara
Bindewald: Daichi Hayashi
Bonifatius: Unsho Ishizuka
THIS IS THE CAST LIST. THERE ARE SO MANY NAMES!
Please forgive the lack of honorifics!
THESE EIGHTEEN VOICE ACTORS RECORDED THE SIXTY-MINUTE-LONG DRAMA CD ALL IN ONE GO.
There are so many!


There were already so many main characters involved, but that just led to there being even more! Hahaha.
I'm happy because I'm drawing Part 1.
It sure is an important place for Myne!
I really wanted to show some of the lower city.
IT WAS A SURPRISE TO LEARN THAT SHE READ THE BOOKS, THE MANGA VERSION, AND EVEN THE WEB NOVEL IN THE SHORT SPAN OF TIME SHE HAD TO PREPARE TO WRITE THE SCRIPT.
SHE ALSO WROTE THE SCRIPT FOR THE SORCEROUS STABBER ORPHEN DRAMA CD SERIES!
THE SCRIPT WAS WRITTEN BY MARIKO KUNISAWA-SAN!
THE DRAMA CD FOCUSES ON PART 3 VOLUME 4 AND PART 3 VOLUME 5, BUT THERE ARE ALSO DIGEST SCENES FOR PARTS 1 AND 2 AS WELL.
ANYWAY, ONCE EVERYONE ARRIVED, THE RECORDING STARTED.
RERECORDING SCENES WITH TOO MUCH BACKGROUND NOISE, ETC.
RECORDING
CHECKING/ ADJUSTING
TESTING
THE DAY WENT LIKE THIS.
THIS IS REPEATED FOR EVERY SCENE!
THE POWER OF VOICE ACTING IS AMAZING!
AND THE DIALOGUE FELT STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BOOKWORM WORLD.
IT WAS LIKE THE CHARACTERS WERE ALIVE RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME,
THEY'RE ALIVE...!
SPARKLE
THAT.
TREMBLE TREMBLE
I ONLY HAD ONE THOUGHT WHEN THE RECORDING BEGAN.

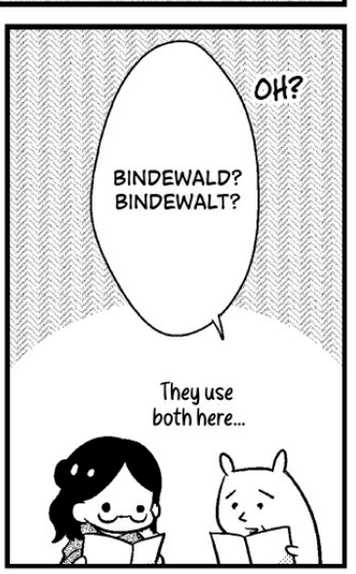

Should this one be changed, Kazuki-sensei?
I think it needs to be a bit more polite.
How should this line go?
CHATTER
CHATTER
STAFF
STAFF
THIS IS WHERE THE DEPTH BEHIND EACH CHARACTER'S VOICE WAS CREATED.
ONCE THE TESTS WERE OVER, THE LINES WERE CHECKED AND MORE DIRECTION WAS GIVEN.

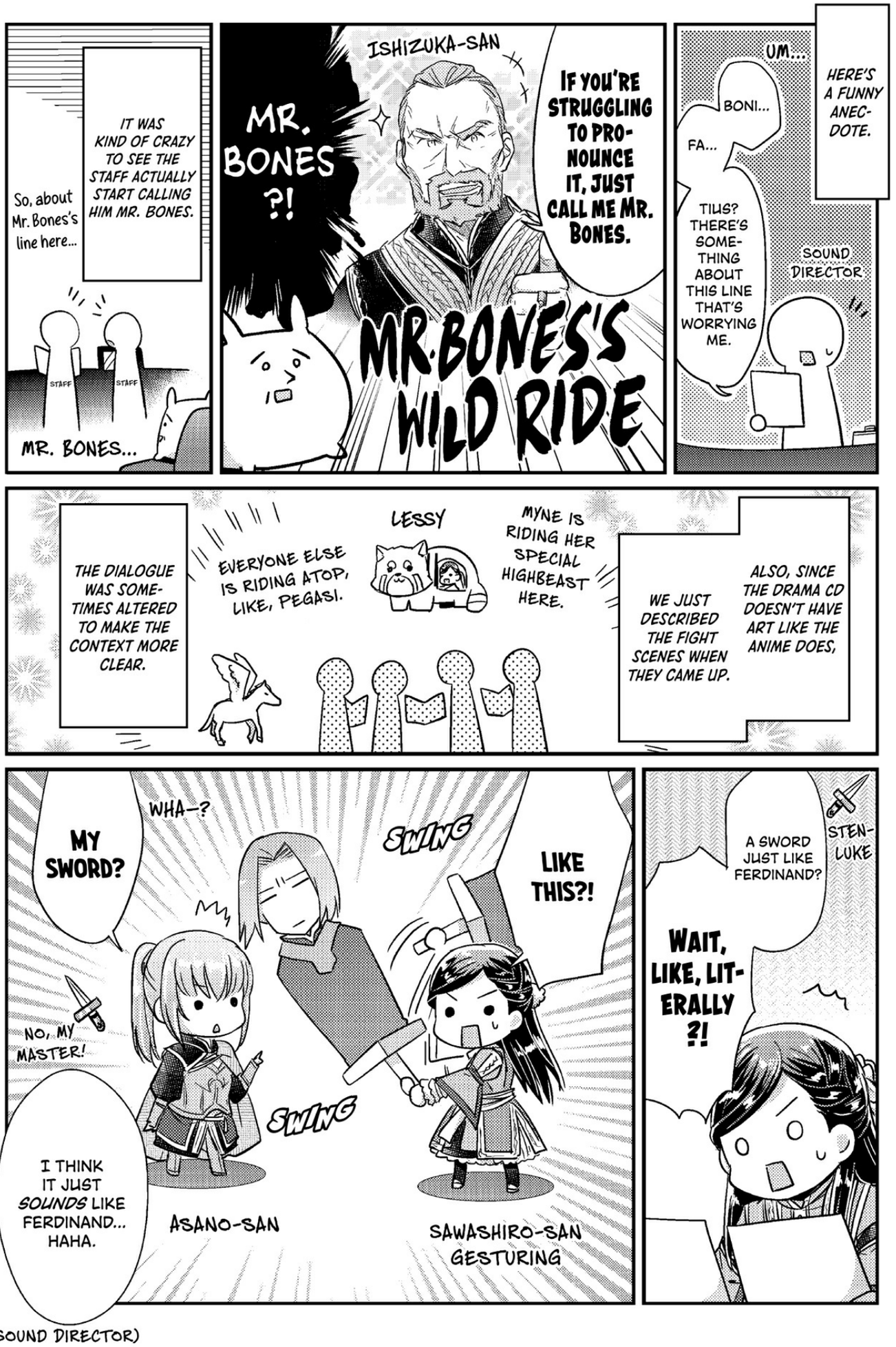

Florencia, Bonifatius, and Ferdinand. Wilfried and Rozem lone are also
THE NAMES OF SOME CHARACTERS AND GODS IN BOOKWORM CERTAINLY ARE TRICKY...
SOME CHARACTERS HAVE MUCH LONGER LINES THAN OTHERS.
Rozemyne, Viscountess Dahldolf is angered not only by the d th of th form High but by t fact th
FEARDI-NAND!
Aww.
Oops. I pro-nounced that as "Fear" instead of "Fer."


GEORGINE
FLUTRANE
STEN
OLDH
EWIGE
THIS IS ALSO WHEN WE SPOKE ABOUT MINOR DETAILS, LIKE HOW TO PRONOUNCE THE NAMES AND WHAT INTONATION TO USE.
SCHUTZARIA
FLORENCIA


I WAS AMAZED TO SEE THEIR ACTING CHANGE IN AN INSTANT DEPENDING ON OUR NEEDS!
PRO VOICE ACTORS ARE SOME-THING ELSE.
YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO SAWASHIRO-SAN'S PERFORMANCE AS MYNE.


IT WAS "BINDE-WALD."
AREN'T YOU THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR?!
KAZUKI-SENSEI?!
?
WHICH WAS IT AGAIN...?
I NORMALLY JUST TYPE "BI" AND PREDICTIVE TEXT HANDLES IT FOR ME, SO...


OH?
BINDEWALD? BINDEWALT?
They use both here...



(SOUND DIRECTOR)


•REC
ONCE THE ADJUSTMENTS ARE DONE, IT'S TIME TO RECORD!
MY HEART'S POUNDING!
I CAN ALREADY PICTURE LORD FERDINAND FURROWING HIS BROW AND TAPPING HIS TEMPLE!
It's great how these two can be both heartwarming and serious!
POUT
The true hero of this recording was Wilfried for his amazing performance!
Lord Sylvester is so cool! He's got the spirit of a true archduke.
UWOOO
THE CONFRONTATION SCENE IS SO INTENSE!
OOH!
← AND SOMETIMES HE ACTS LIKE HIS USUAL SELF.
NERVOUS SWEATING
SH-SHE SEEMS SO MEAN!
Conversations between the two mothers are so nice.
CHARLOTTE IS A TRUE ANGEL!
Kind, gentle Fran...
Lutz looking cool.
But he still seems weaker than Angelica. (Haha.)
Even Damuel is cool in the serious scenes!
AND IN THE LOWER CITY...
IDIOT!
MYNE!
WHA?!
STRONG
THERE'S STILL A LOT MORE, BUT THERE'S NOT ENOUGH SPACE! PLEASE ENJOY THE REST IN THE ACTUAL RECORDING!


TENSION
THE ATMOSPHERE GOT TENSE IN AN INSTANT!
IT WAS LIKE I WAS LOOKING AT A LIVING PAINTING.
STRAIGHT AFTER
ONE, TWO...
OKAY, I START THIS SCENE.
LASTLY, THE HUBBUB IS RECORDED.
HUBBUB
IT'S CALLED THIS BECAUSE THE SCENE INVOLVES A LOT OF CHARACTERS TALKING AT ONCE.
THANKS TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS DRAMA CD,
I THINK SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL HAS BEEN CREATED.
BOTH KAZUKI-SENSEI AND I SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY IN AWE.
HAVING SEEN PRO VOICE ACTORS AT WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME,
(A PROFESSIONAL AUTHOR LOSING ALL HER VOCABULARY IN AMAZEMENT.)
Pros! Wow!
Wow!
Wow!
ONCE THE LENGTHY SCENES ARE DONE, THE RECORDING SESSION IS COMPLETE.
IT WILL ONLY BE SOLD ONLINE AND IN JAPAN.
PLEASE ENJOY!
AND THAT LOVE-FILLED ASCENDANCE OF A BOOKWORM DRAMA CD IS NOW COMING TO YOU!

The End

Drama CD Post-Recording Report

by Miya Kazuki

Our story begins at 10 a.m. on an unspecified day in May 2017.

My husband had agreed to take me to the train station where I was due to meet up with the others, but the journey there was quite an ordeal. Our destination was far away, the trains were completely packed with people, and the train network we had to navigate was a bona fide maze. I didn't recognize the names of most of the train lines we had to pass through. There were also a ton of confusing exits, and so many billboards that we couldn't even spot our destination. The way there was so complicated that, had I gone alone, this story would have been called, "The Grand Adventure of the Author Who Just Wanted to Go to the Recording Session," wherein a humble author finds herself completely lost like some helpless child.

Regardless, after arriving and meeting up with both my editor (the one in charge of *Bookworm*) and Suzuka-san, we began walking to the studio. It wasn't long before Suzuka-san shot me a look while holding her stomach.

"I've been so nervous since yesterday that I didn't know what to do with myself, but seeing how composed you are has somehow calmed me down, Kazuki-san."

"That's nice."

"Are you nervous too?"

"Not really."

"Whaaat?! How can you not be nervous?!"

"Right?" my husband said, nodding in agreement. "She's the author, but she's not nervous at all! Even my heart's beating like crazy. This is the first recording session!"

It seemed that Suzuka-san and my husband were on the same wavelength there, since they both loved voice actors, anime, games, and the like.

“I mean, I don’t normally watch TV, so I don’t have any real attachment to voice actors like you two do,” I explained.

To be clear, I was very interested in what professional voice acting was like, and I was certainly looking forward to this recording session, but my heart wasn’t pounding with the kind of nervous excitement one feels when meeting their idols. What I felt was more akin to the small pangs of anxiety one gets before their first time meeting someone they’re going to be working with.

In short, I wasn’t completely calm, but drama CDs are born from voice and sound, not written text. This was work firmly separate from my own. I had been a lot more nervous meeting my editor for the first time than I was meeting voice actors.

Suzuka-san and I soon arrived at the studio with the director’s guidance. He showed us the bathrooms, the recording booth, and the control room.

The recording booth was where the voice actors were going to be. There were four microphones positioned in front of a wall, and opposite them was a single camera so that the control room could see what was going on. There was also a small desk by the microphones that had snacks and such. The other three walls were crowded with chairs, enough to seat eighteen people in total. I had a feeling it would end up getting a bit cramped once all the voice actors were there, but since this was my first time seeing the inside of a studio, I had no real frame of reference.

The machine-filled control room was for the sound director and other staff members to use. There was a large monitor inside which showed what was happening in the booth, but the camera was focused on the middle two microphones, so the ones on the sides ended up somewhat blurry.

Also in the control room was a sofa big enough to seat three people, and a round table with four chairs surrounding it. Much like the one in the recording booth, this table also had snacks and drinks on it. We were going to be watching from there.

We first greeted the producer, the sound director, and the rest of the staff. As it turned out, the producer had been a fan of *Bookworm* since the very first volume! Thanks to the hard work of the hired sound director, they had assembled an excellent cast that perfectly suited the image of each character. My gratitude for that is beyond words.

We then exchanged business cards, as is traditional for adults... which led to disaster!

You see, I didn't have any business cards on me—by which I mean, I'd never had any made in the first place. This was the third time in my life that I'd thought, *"Hm... I should probably make business cards in preparation for next time..."* I know that I really should get some made, but since I spend all day writing indoors, I just don't feel the need. At the moment of my writing this, I still haven't ordered any—a decision that I'll surely come to regret again soon.

"My apologies," I said. "I don't have any business cards."

"Sorry. I'm all out at the moment," Suzuka-san apologized. She was my business card-less ally.

"Whew... I'm glad I'm not the only one without any."

"That's not something to be pleased about!"

"Oh, but I do have one of Suzuka-san's business cards from before. Here, look."

"Kazuki-san, wait a second. That's something I gave you to keep, not to give to others."

"Oh, I know. I just wanted to brag about having one of your business cards."

The producer blinked as he heard our exchange. "Kazuki-sensei sure is a lot like Myne, isn't she? Like, her aura, the way she talks..." he said, sounding rather impressed. But my editor shook his head and replied:

"No, she's actually a lot more like Ferdinand."

Suzuka-san nodded in agreement as she listened to them, but I had no idea what they were on about. It was around then that the scriptwriter, Kunisawa-

san, arrived.

“Wooow! There’s Myne! You must be Kazuki-sensei. I recognized you straight away!”

Truly, I had no idea what she was on about. Nobody had ever said, “Wow, there’s Myne,” to me before, especially not when they were just meeting me for the first time.

As the recording session approached, the voice actors steadily filtered in. They dropped by the control room and introduced themselves, but I didn’t know who was going to voice whom.

“That was Takeuchi. He voices Benno, right? And Asano-san voices Angelica?”

“That’s right.”

Suzuka-san was very familiar with voice actors. I had done my best to learn who they all were in advance, but I just couldn’t match their names to their faces. Each time someone introduced themselves, I would glance at my notes to see who they were voicing... but with so many new faces streaming in, there wasn’t much time for that. In the end, there were several people I simply didn’t recognize. I really should have looked up their faces instead of just their names, but hindsight is twenty-twenty.

Once everyone was gathered, we moved to the recording booth where Suzuka-san and I were introduced as the mangaka and the author, respectively.

“To be honest, this is my first time working on a drama CD, so I’ll be leaving everything to the pros. I’m sure you’re all going to knock it out of the park.”

Once my brief greeting was done, we came together for a meeting. I answered some questions that the voice actors had for me, such as “What emotional state is the character in during this line?” and such, while the producer and my editor handed out clear files about *Bookworm*. Those who didn’t know which character was theirs were given explanations. All in all, things went over pretty well. I was also surprised to see that they had prepared twenty clear files’ worth of papers for this. (Hahaha.)

Miyuki Sawashiro-san asked about Rozemyne’s mental state and personality,

and let me tell you, she was like Myne to a T. Her passion and enthusiasm for voice acting reminded me of Myne's devotion to making books, and I must admit, her eyes were so strong and pretty that they left a lasting impression on me.

During my explanation, she was given a clear file with the cover art for Volume 1 on it. She looked at Myne's illustration and murmured, "Mm. I'm pretty cute, aren't I?" It was at that moment that I knew everything was going to be just fine.

When I had been deciding on the voice actor for Rozemyne, I thought about who would be good at both narration and monologue—whose voice could suit not just Rozemyne, the archduke's adopted daughter, but also Myne the commoner and Urano. It's an unusually multifaceted role, and if we were given the opportunity to make more drama CDs focused on Rozemyne as she continues to grow up, I wanted our voice actor to be able to handle everything that would entail. And of course, the only person I could imagine in that role was Sawashiro-san. I'm truly glad that my request was fulfilled. Praise be to the gods!

Due to time constraints, our meeting was cut short after a bit of explaining and we returned to the control room. Suzuka-san, Kunisawa-san, and I sat on the sofa in that order, while the producer, my editor, and my husband sat at the table.

"For anime and drama CDs that have already had several recording sessions, we often have to split up the recording days based on the voice actors' schedules. But since this is the first recording session for *Bookworm*, we gathered all the voice actors—even those who appear right at the end of the recording—so that they could get to know their characters together and create the proper atmosphere for the work. We'll need to get the recording done before our time is up."

That was the explanation I was given.

There were two audio staff sitting in front of the equipment. One was the sound director, who gave directions to the voice actors while thinking about the

recording process and speaking order; the other was the mixer, who stared at his screen while adjusting recording labels, checking the lines and noise, and so on.

“We’ll start with a test reading of the script, with everyone working on creating their character voices.”

If we had any requests for a particular voice, we could ask the voice actors to adjust their performance—after all, the voices that were decided on here would end up being the ones used going forward. The test began with me still not really understanding what it meant to “create a character voice.”

Tadanori Date-san (Fran), Miyuki Sawashiro-san (Rozemyne), Shunsuke Takeuchi-san (Benno), and Shun Horie (Lutz) were the first ones to stand in front of the microphones. All I could see on the screen was their backs, and since the lens was focused on the middle two voice actors, the two on the outside ended up blurry. I could recognize Sawashiro-san, since her microphone was closest, but the others I couldn’t make out at all. Oh well. I could tell them apart from their voices, at least.

I had already expected Sawashiro-san and Horie-san to use voices that perfectly suited their characters, but I hadn’t recognized any of Date-san’s previous works during my preliminary research, so I didn’t know what to expect from him.

“Wow... His Fran is just like Fran. Incredible.”

His voice fit my mental image so well that I spoke without even thinking. I just had no complaints whatsoever. There wasn’t even a bit of dissonance in my mind.

Editor: “Benno certainly is cool, isn’t he?”

Suzuka-san: “Ooh. I want Benno to yell at me.”

Suzuka-san, who was sitting with me, has always been a member of the fan community that wants Benno to scold them, and so she was practically trembling with excitement as she listened with a hand over her mouth. I could

understand why, since Takeuchi-san's Benno was truly impressive. At that moment, I knew for sure that Suzuka would have a surge of comrades when the drama CD released. Still, at that point, anyone who wanted to get yelled at by Benno could just replay portions of the CD over and over again. He'd shout "You idiot!" as many times as they wanted. (Hahaha.)

Benno's voice was also just as I had expected. It wasn't too low and it perfectly matched my own interpretation, so I had no corrections whatsoever.

Editor: "That's Sawashiro-san for you. It's like she's literally Myne."

Me: "She definitely has the voice of a protagonist. Her conversation with Benno is so nice."

I was beyond satisfied with Sawashiro-san's voice; it was cute, and it suited Rozemyne just as well as I had hoped.

Suzuka-san: "This Lutz is good. He sounds so cool."

Me: "Right? He sounds just as I imagined."

Horie-san's Lutz was perfect as well, meaning all four of our voice actors were good to go.

We then moved on to our next voice actors. Takahiro Sakurai-san's Ferdinand was spot-on, and Kousuke Toriumi-san's Sylvester sounded so much like Sylvester that I actually couldn't believe it. Neither voice needed any fixes; the voice actors had surpassed what I had expected from my research, and I was surprised to see just how well they had formed their voices around the characters. They were incredible.

The test continued up until the sound director interjected, and from there, we in the control room started discussing their performances. We discussed what had caught our attention and confirmed whether there were any changes to be made.

Editor: “Kazuki-san, how were the character voices?”

Me: “Absolutely perfect. Voice actors sure are incredible, aren’t they? You can just keep going.”

Editor: “Getting the character voice correct at the start is the hardest part. If this goes smoothly, then the voice actors will get more used to their characters as recording proceeds, which means they’ll be even better by the end.”

My editor had been there for the recording of *Orphen*’s drama CD, so he happily told me that this was shaping up to be a good one.

Kunisawa-san: “Kazuki-sensei, is Fran’s last line okay the way it is? You always pay a lot of attention to how Fran acts when he’s angry, right?”

Me: “It did concern me a bit. Fran doesn’t shout like that; he just puts on the pressure. If possible, I’d like for the exclamation mark to be cut. He needs to act as chilly Fran.”

In the rough draft of the recording script, Fran had almost exploded with anger during his last few lines. I requested that Kunisawa-san edit them so that he would act chilly instead, and the sound director conveyed my request to Date-san in the booth. He only conveyed the first part of my request, which probably meant that “chilly Fran” was too hard to understand. (Hahaha.)

Either way, Date-san pulled off a brilliant high-pressure Fran. Voice actors are incredible!

Once all of the voice actors had a grasp on their characters and we had conveyed our fixes, it was time for the real-deal recording to begin. Incidentally, outside of casually running through a few pages at the start to make their character voices, there was no practice; the voice actors just worked their way through the pages one by one and recorded it all.

Once the recording was done, we had another discussion during which we went over any little problems that we wanted to fix, while the mixer checked

for any noise and told the sound director what parts needed to be rerecorded. The mixer we had was something else, by the way—my untrained ear never would have noticed the background noise or the super minor slipups in the dialogue that he picked up on.

Ultimately, the sound director would organize all of the corrections and scenes that needed to be rerecorded. He would then give out instructions to the voice actors one after another, like:

"Please repeat Rozemyne's second line on Page X. There was background noise."

"There was a slight slipup in the middle of Benno's line on Page Y. These lines also seemed to overlap, so could I ask for them to be read separately?"

"We have a correction for Ferdinand's line on Page Z."

The voice actors would repeat those isolated sections with just as much energy as they had during their group reading. They snapped into character out of nowhere—they could sob and shout on command, matching the emotion and the tone perfectly despite the previous line not having been reread.

Me: "Voice actors really are amazing."

Suzuka-san: "Kazuki-san, you keep saying 'amazing' over and over."

Me: "Well, I mean, they *are* amazing!"

They were professional voice actors precisely because they had practiced and developed those skills, but still—I couldn't help but sigh in amazement at the sheer power of skilled workers. I also really loved how Sakurai-san said, "Good grief..." I don't want to say that I should have forced an "Excellent" into the Part 3 finale specifically to hear it read aloud, but I must admit, there were times when I was starting to wish that I had. There just hadn't been a place for it. Ngh...

Once all of the relevant sections had been rerecorded, we moved on to the next scene. Each scene in *Bookworm* tends to have very different characters, so

we needed to check the new character voices. Next up were Natsumi Fujiwara-san's Wilfried and Mai Nakahara-san's Georgine.

I'd expected that Fujiwara-san would make a fine Wilfried after researching her, and fine she was. The innocent yet stupid quality to her voice as she spoke to Georgine was very on-brand for her character.

For me, the most surprising pick of all the cast was easily Nakahara-san as Georgine. Everyone in the control room was waiting with bated breath, eager to see what she would come up with. And when she spoke, in all seriousness, I couldn't help but clap.

Suzuka-san: "Ooh, that was so good. She sounds so villainous."

Me: "I love that refined nastiness behind the kindness in her voice."

Kunisawa-san: "Her tone is perfect, but doesn't she sound a little too young?"

We organized our thoughts, and the sound director asked Nakahara-san to try making the character sound older. It was then that I was truly introduced to the idea of character voices taking shape through gradual instruction, and it was crazy. To think one could make such a vague request and actually get results! It was like my eyes had been opened to a whole new world. That was all we ended up needing to make her Georgine voice perfect.

In short, Nakahara-san's performance was phenomenal. Please look forward to it.

The next voices were Tadanori Date-san as Bezewanst, Daichi Hayashi-san as Bindewald, and Kenji Hamada-san as Karstedt. That's right—Date-san was voicing both Fran and Bezewanst! Surely I'm not the only one who had to do a double-take when I found out.

When Date-san began speaking to Hayashi-san as Bezewanst, he sounded too young for someone the former High Bishop's age. We all agreed, and so he was asked to sound older.

"Ooh! There we go! Now he's Bezewanst!"

In an instant, Fran had transformed into Bezewanst. Incredible, right? I don't know how many times I've said this, but voice actors are amazing.

Hayashi-san's Bindewald very much had the tone of a cruel noble, which was perfect. His voice acting suited Shiina-sama's illustration flawlessly.

Suzuka-san: "Karstedt is such a hunk!"

Suzuka-san's excitement was justified—Hamada-san's Karstedt was so cool that I wanted to clench my fists and cheer, "You rock, Father!" It was the perfect voice for a knight commander used to leading his men. Hamada's voice alone made Karstedt thirty percent more manly. This is a fact.

After that, we had Nodoka Hasegawa-san as Florencia and Masumi Asano-san as Angelica. Truth be told, Asano-san was publicized as playing Angelica, but she's also playing Elvira. I was surprised, since there's such a large age gap between those two characters.

Our test revealed that Hasegawa-san's voice just didn't suit Florencia—she sounded more like a kind mother overflowing with compassion than an archduke's first wife. In fact, she was pretty much Effa.

Asano-san's Elvira spoke a bit faster and had the energy of a lively, proactive mother, but that made her feel less like a noble wife and more like a craftswoman. She was playing a "competent woman" as instructed, but she wasn't speaking as I would expect Elvira to speak. When paired with Hasegawa-san's initial Florencia, it was like listening to a discussion between two lower-city moms rather than two noble mothers.

Me: "I think Florencia's voice should be a step younger, and have more—how can I put this?—noble grace."

Kunisawa-san: "I agree. I think her voice should be soft and calm."

Me: "Elvira's voice is right age-wise, but she's talking slightly too fast."

Kunisawa-san: "I feel you. She should focus on speaking more gently and with a noble sort of mindset."

We organized our thoughts, the sound director conveyed them, and then *boom*—we had Florencia and Elvira, just as I had imagined them. I once again ended up clapping at the incredible skill of pro voice actors. It was truly amazing.

Once their voices had been decided on, it was once again time for the real deal. The sound director marked a place in the script and everything was recorded in one go, at which point we started talking the scenes over.

Kunisawa-san: "I think Veronica should show a bit more restraint, since nobles need to control their emotions."

Me: "Mm... I don't think so. She thought hope had finally come, only for her dreams to be dashed right before her eyes. Veronica had never even considered that her own children would ignore her like that, so this voice is perfect for her."

Kumiko Nakane-san was our voice actor for not just Veronica, but also Rihyarda. There's no denying that she has a real talent for voicing older women.

We issued our minor corrections, and next came a scene with yet more new noble characters. There was Konomi Kohara-san as Charlotte, Kumiko Nakane-san as Rihyarda, Atsushi Tamaru-san as Damuel, Masumi Asano-san as Angelica, and Kazuki Narumi-san as Lamprecht.

The testing showed that Kohara-san had really encapsulated the cuteness that one would expect from Charlotte, but when she was speaking to Rozemyne, she sounded as though she were the older sibling. The control room instructed her to sound a step younger, at which point Kohara-san was like, "What? Even younger than this?" She then hesitantly repeated her line in a younger voice, and oof—it was too young this time.

Kunisawa-san: "The tone is fine, but the way she says things is a little..."

Me: “Right, right. If she can stop doing the lisp, it’ll sound perfect.”

The director gave those instructions, and the very instant Kohara-san repeated her line, both Suzuka-san and I immediately conveyed our approval: “Charlotte! So cute!”

Nakane-san’s Rihyarda was a perfect old woman—no changes needed. She sounded exactly as I’d imagined. Between you and me, I was struck with regret that I hadn’t forced the line, “Come now, Ferdinand, my boy!” into the script. It was incredible how distinct she was able to make Veronica and Rihyarda sound, in my opinion.

Asano-san’s Angelica sounded STRONG, so it was perfect to me. I could hear the steel in her voice when she was holding down the struggling Wilfried, and the first thought that ran through my mind was, “Keep on holding him down. Just like that.” (Hahaha.)

Suzuka-san: “Wow... Tamaru-san is literally Damuel.”

Me: “Uh huh. This is exactly what I was hoping for.”

This drama CD contains quite a few fight scenes with Damuel, so he had a lot of awesome-sounding lines. As I was listening to Tamaru-san doing the voice, I couldn’t help but think, “Hold on, when did Damuel get so cool?!” At the time, I really wanted to hear him say some totally lame lines to balance things out.

Narumi-san’s Lamprecht was also exactly what I had imagined. There was no dissonance at all—Lamprecht’s voice flowed into my ears, and I could immediately picture him as some sort of jock or hunk, which was perfect.

Lines for Rozemyne’s lower city family and the “mob” characters like the school friends, noblemen, and noblewomen were all done by the voice actors we had there, with some doubling or even tripling up. I had been too busy to look at the monitor while this was going on, so I hadn’t seen who was playing whom, but I was definitely surprised when I later checked the cast list. Voice actors really can change their voices dramatically based on the role.

One school friend was played by Natsu Yorita-san, the same person who voiced Cornelius. I won't write the character's name here, since they weren't named by that point in Part 3, but some readers might already know who I'm referring to. He had the voice of a cute little boy, and in all honesty, I think he might have had more lines than Cornelius.

Noblewoman A was voiced by Natsumi Fujiwara-san. I was like, "She's going to be played by Wilfried?!" It's crazy how voice actors can change their voices at the drop of a hat.

Tadanori Date-san played Nobleman A. Considering that he also voiced Fran and Bezewanst, this was his third role! The characters are all different ages, but he deftly changed his voice to suit each one. Now that was real talent.

Noblewoman B was voiced by... Natsu Yorita-san! That's her third role alongside Cornelius and the school friend! Is it common knowledge that voice actors can do things like this? It really boggles the mind just how much skill they're expected to have.

Nobleman B was played by Atsushi Tamaru-san, the same person who voiced Damuel. I listened as closely as I could, but it was hard to believe he was being played by the same person! I thought he was much older.

Kunisawa-san had requested that the nobles sound more palpably antagonistic during their conversation scene, since this is a drama CD and our first-time listeners won't necessarily know that they're being villainous. I could understand why—since the conversation between them didn't have any descriptive text, it was harder to pinpoint the nobles' emotional states as they spoke.

After the session, we tweaked the script a little. There were some parts that only became apparently flawed once they were read aloud, some lines that needed to be cut, and so on.

The next scene had Takahiro Sakurai-san playing Stenluke, and Unsho Ishizuka-san playing Bonifatius.

Sakurai-san: "What kind of voice does Stenluke have?"

Sound Director: “Exactly the same voice as Ferdinand. Keep the tone and everything the same.”

Sakurai-san: “Uh... What exactly *is* Stenluke?”

Sound Director: “A magic sword. It’s Angelica’s weapon, and it speaks in Ferdinand’s voice.”

For some reason, everyone in the booth immediately burst into laughter.

“A talking sword?!”

“A magic sword?! Bwahaha!”

It wasn’t long before Asano, Angelica’s voice actor, proudly declared: “Oh, it’s my sword! I own the sword!” That made everyone laugh even harder.

When Ishizuka-san spoke, everyone in the control room instantly shouted “Bonifatius!” and started laughing. Everyone agreed at once: he was so perfectly Bonifatius that we couldn’t help but clap and shout, “Good job, Grandfather!” Really, nobody else could have played him after that. I laughed so hard when he came to save Rozemyne.

Both Ishizuka-san and the sound director struggled to pronounce Bonifatius’s name, so Ishizuka-san was eventually like, “Boni... You can just call me Mr. Bones. Let’s go with Mr. Bones!” He gave a big thumbs-up and everything! He sure was quick to jump to nicknames, and the name “Mr. Bones” ended up making our already cute grandfather even cuter!

I tried telling him that the readers just call him “Grandfather” or “Grandpa Bo” in the comments section, but he couldn’t hear me from the control room. Too bad.

Daichi Hayashi-san played a mob noble from the Veronica faction, meaning he played two villains here. Both sounded villainous, but they were completely unique. The mob noble sounded nasty but didn’t have the distinct toady voice of Count Bindewald.

The black-clad noble was played by Kenji Hamada-san. That character name alone might make one assume he’s a mob, but he’s actually more of a mid-boss

who keeps showing up. I won't name him here, but he's the one who attacked Rozemyne.

I thought the initial voice for the black-clad noble sounded way too cool. I wanted something appropriate for a mid-boss, but he sounded more like a hero. I admittedly thought it was a little unreasonable of me to ask him to speak with a cloth over his mouth for the sake of realism, especially considering that he needed to speak his lines smoothly and clearly at the same time, but he nodded and did it without issue. So amazing.

Last was Miyuki Sawashiro-san creating Urano's voice. Urano only had a single line in a flashback, but she was way older than Myne or Rozemyne, and since she had a completely different body before she was reincarnated, it was important to get it right.

Sawashiro-san: "How old is she?"

Sound Director: "Twenty-two. She's a college student."

From that alone, Sawashiro-san snapped right into the proper voice. Don't you think that's incredible? Urano's voice is entirely different from Rozemyne's childish one, and yet you can tell that they both speak in the same way. I was surprised every single time I heard her speak.

The lower city family kept surprising me too. Again, I was too busy during the recording stage to look at the monitor, so it wasn't until afterward when I checked who had voiced whom that I realized Tadanori Date-san was playing Gunther. I couldn't believe how many roles he played. Like, whaaat?

Gunther's voice was low, and I remembered asking the sound director if we could make him sound a little bit younger, but I hadn't realized it was actually Date-san... I really mean it when I say I was surprised. Sheesh... Date-san really carried the world on his shoulders that day.

Natsu Yorita-san did the voice for Effa, but she played a lot of other roles too. She kinda just popped up anywhere and everywhere, but her voices were always distinct and totally unique. I couldn't work out if she has a special talent

for this, or if all voice actors are skilled in that way. It was impossible to tell—the voice actors were just too good.

A mother overflowing with warm love and compassion... and yet, she's also the voice of Cornelius. Wow. Incredible.

Tuuli was played by Mai Nakahara-san, which means Georgine and Tuuli shared a voice actor! Two characters who are pretty much complete opposites! Still, given the roles that Nakahara-san usually plays, it's easier to envision her playing Tuuli in the first place. The voice she does is so cute that you wouldn't believe she's also voicing Georgine. Please look forward to her truly angelic Tuuli.

During the recording process, I had to focus on the script while listening to the voices, so I didn't really look at the monitor much. As a result, I missed most of what the voice actors were doing on-screen. I realized midway through that this was going to be a problem when I got around to writing this very report and started trying to look up more, but my eyes were always drawn back to the script.

I didn't spend much time looking at the monitor, but I'll tell you what I did learn:

Sawashiro-san swings her hands and moves her body a lot, playing her role physically rather than just vocally. Most others had their legs about shoulder-width apart as they spoke. The microphones were locked into place, so the taller actors had to bend down a little.

I could only see her back, but one thing I remember thinking was how much boyish heroism Fujiwara-san was exuding as she voiced Wilfried.

It seemed pretty rough when a bunch of different characters had to speak in a single scene; there was a ton of moving around as the voice actors dipped in and out as required. Takeuchi-san ended up stuck in this awkward position where he was pretty much stuck rushing to and from the mics. It was so cute!

I don't know how the voice actors in the booth spent their time while we were discussing corrections in the control room, but maybe they read their lines together and discussed who would be using what mic at what point.

That reminds me—Toriumi-san acted so much like Sylvester that I had to wonder if some voice actors are cast based on them already resembling their character. I didn't know whether that was his "true self" or whether he was just roleplaying for the CD, but during breaks he was always like, "Woohoo!" He would wave at the camera even when we weren't asking questions, and he'd casually help out some of the newbies when they were concerned about whether they needed to change their slippers before going to the bathroom. He was basically Sylvester personified, so I really wanted to hear him say, "Gah! Praise be to the gods!" (Haha.)

Sawashiro-san was quite the jokester, and she was similar to Myne in many ways. When the sound director announced that their break time was over, she'd look at the camera and make these "OK" signs with this super cute, super smug expression. There was one occasion when someone actually had to say, "Hold on, I need a second!" afterward, at which point she frantically started shaking her hands like, "Wait, wait! I take it back!" She even made a big "X" with her arms, exactly like Myne does with the guildmaster in the manga version! It really made me laugh.

Another thing that stuck with me was how serious Sakurai-san was. I feel as though I only ever saw him silently reading the script. Oh, but I think he was laughing along with everyone else when talking about Stenluke's voice, so maybe he was quite energetic when I wasn't looking at the monitor. Hm... Maybe he was just trying to get into character as Ferdinand...?

Many of the voice actors were at some point or another agonizing over the names of characters and gods being super long and written all in katakana, which made them hard to pronounce in Japanese. That was probably the thing I regretted most during the whole recording session. "Florencia" and "Schutzaria" were hard, and then "Geduldh"? Hah! Geduldh was immediately written out. Basically, everyone struggled a lot during the recording.

"I'm really sorry! When I decided on the names, the book adaptation hadn't even started yet, and I never thought for a second that there'd be drama CD versions!"

I apologized with all my heart from the control room and thereby resolved to

make the names easier to pronounce should I ever start on a new series. Thank you all again for working to say them properly!

Also, I have to say—while the sound director's casting sense was definitely good, I ended up questioning how much the casting really mattered when voice actors can change their voices so freely. The most important part seemed to be remembering everyone's faces, since this was a job that involved working with others in person.

I saw the voice actors off, and while I wanted to compliment them all on their individual performances, there were so many names and faces that I still hadn't managed to memorize. To make up for that, I've ended up unleashing all of my thoughts in this report.

To summarize, I now strongly understand the importance of remembering voice actors' faces, making it crystal clear what kinds of voices I've envisioned, and organizing everything in a way that people can easily digest. Many voice actors are too busy to actually read the works they're doing voices for, and on top of *Ascendance of a Bookworm* being a super long series, this recording session was for parts that hadn't even been published yet. Rather than researching the voice actors, I should have summarized Part 1, detailed the personality of each character, and put together some study guides of sorts. That would have helped the production of the drama CD a lot more than anything else.

If we're lucky enough for there to be another recording session, I'd like to use what I've learned to hopefully make it better. Thank you very much for the valuable experience.

I wish to express my gratitude to the staff, the producer, the sound director, and everyone else in the drama CD production staff. I also want to thank Mariko Kunisawa-sama for writing the script, TO Books and my editor, and Suzuka-sama for drawing the recording report manga despite her busy schedule.

Character Design Sheets

Nora
14 Years Old
Hair: Light purple (blueish)
Eyes: Blue

Thore
11 Years Old
Hair: Light purple (blueish)
Eyes: Blue



Rick
11 Years Old
Hair: Dark green
Eyes: Gray

Marthe
8 Years Old
Hair: Dark green
Eyes: Gray



Nora/Thore
Rick/Marthe

These characters were all just as Kazuki-sensei had pictured them, so no changes were needed. She had visualized Nora as a girl so cute it made sense for someone to want to buy her, and Thore as a defiant-looking boy who closely resembles her.



Justus/Oswald

Justus was given a more natural perm. Oswald was adjusted to look more like a noble used to directing others, and since he's an archnoble, he was given a more suitable jacket like the one worn by those in Karstedt's family.

Justus
32 Years Old
Hair: Gray
Eyes: Brown

Oswald
30 Years Old
Hair: Dark brown, almost black
Eyes: Auburn





Leidenschaft's Spear

The divine instrument of Leidenschaft the God of Fire. The feystone on its tip shines when saturated with mana. It looks amazing in Rozemyne's hands on the action-packed cover for Part 3 Volume 3.

Ingo 33 Years Old
Hair: Yellow
Eyes: Bright blue



Ingo

Since he went independent at a young age, he's at the bottom of the hierarchy in terms of Carpentry Guild foremen. He's got aggressive-looking eyes and the kind of arrogant appearance befitting a craftsman. When he was visiting the temple in the book, he shaved, removed his bandanna, and put on better clothes.

Angelica 12 Years Old
Hair: Light blue
Eyes: Dark blue



Philine 7 Years Old
Hair: Yellow
Eyes: Green



Angelica/Philine

According to Kazuki-sensei, this design for Angelica perfectly encapsulated a quiet, cute-looking girl whose appearance does not reflect her personality at all. Her ever-important manablade was added to her waist in a subsequent drawing. Philine's adorable quietness is real though, as one might expect from someone who so thoroughly enjoys picture books.

Part 3 Volume 4



Bonifatius

Kazuki-sensei wanted him to be a muscly dude who readers could immediately identify as Karstedt's father, and this sketch achieved just that. He's a big guy, even taller than Ferdinand, so his presence demands careful attention during the actual illustrations.



Georgine

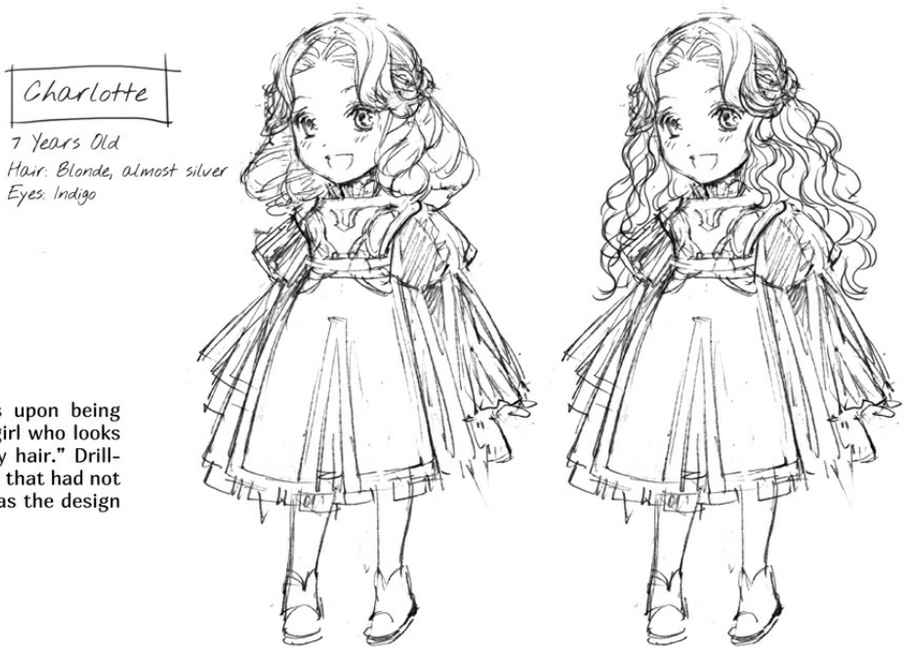
Shiina-sensei designed her with the following concept in mind: a beauty who looks like a villainess, with a sculpted appearance and distinctive facial features. Because she's thirty-two years old, extra care was taken to make sure she didn't look too young. Her actual illustration in the series is quite intense.

Part 3 Volume 5



Fritz

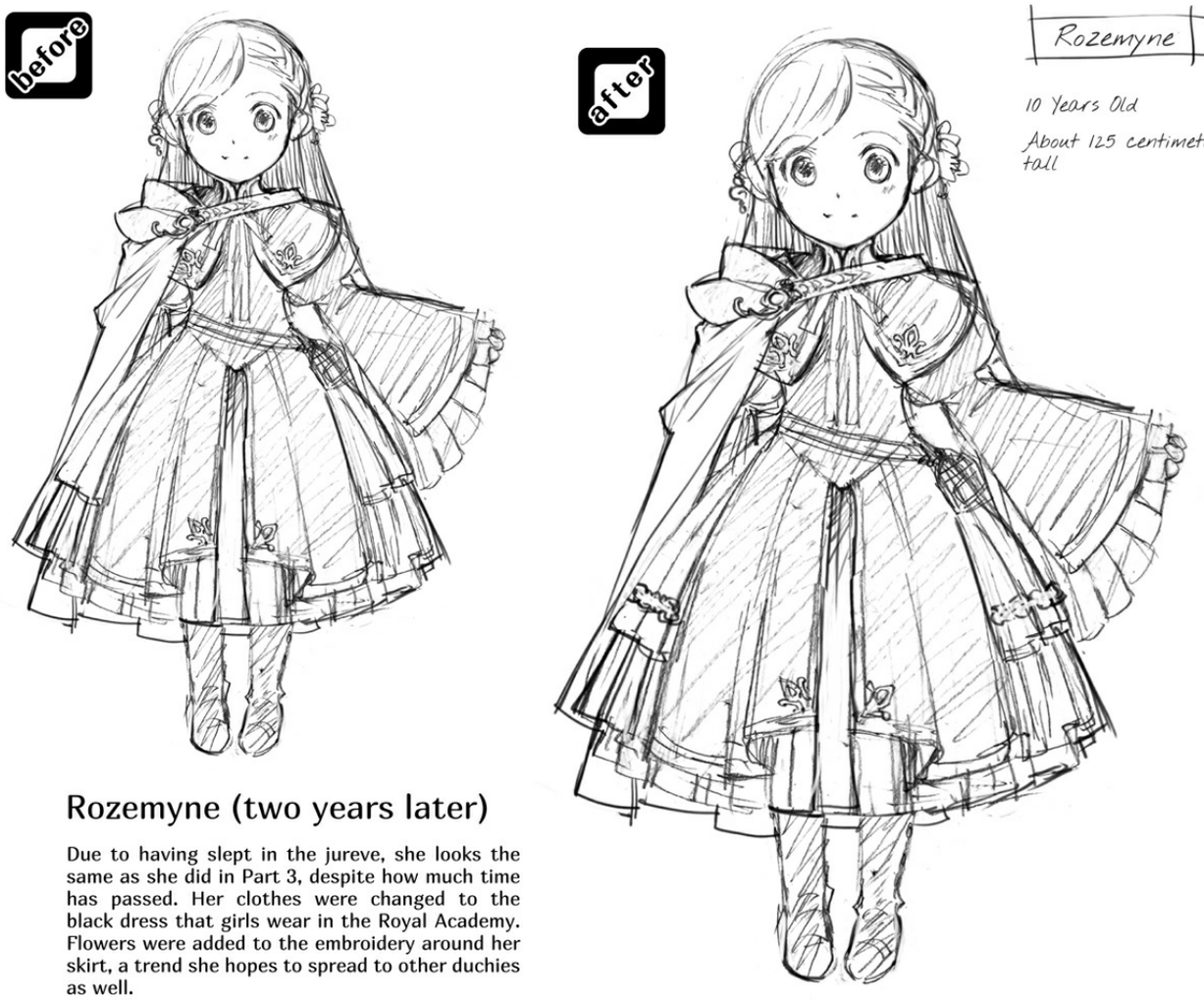
He is well regarded for his patience and serves as a mediator between Lutz and Gil in the Rozemyne Workshop. Shiina-sensei described him as having a plain face.



Charlotte

Shiina-sensei sent two illustrations upon being asked to draw Charlotte as "a cute girl who looks like a life-sized doll with fluffy, wavy hair." Drill-shaped hair is a classic trope and one that had not yet featured in the series, so that was the design Kazuki-sensei chose.

Part 4 Volume 1



Rozemyne (two years later)

Due to having slept in the jureve, she looks the same as she did in Part 3, despite how much time has passed. Her clothes were changed to the black dress that girls wear in the Royal Academy. Flowers were added to the embroidery around her skirt, a trend she hopes to spread to other duchies as well.

Philine (two years later)

A first-year layscholar with a calm personality. She wears a black dress and a cape displaying her duchy's color.

Philine

10 Years Old

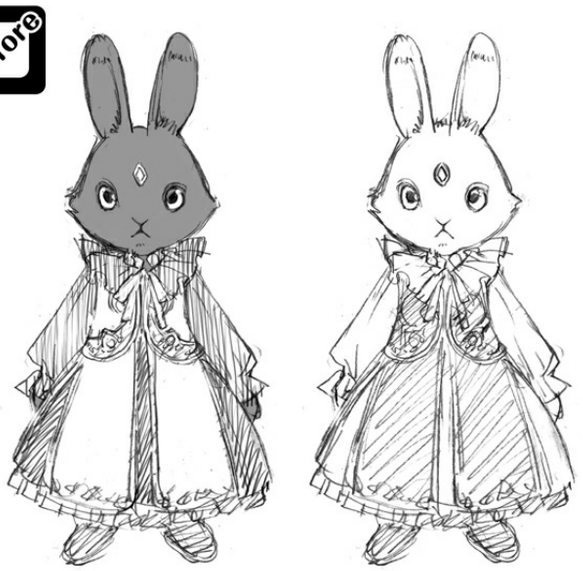
About 140 centimeters tall



Schwartz/Weiss

Despite being magic tools, they look like rabbits. Their dresses are differently colored, and their vests have such elaborate designs due to all the magecraft built into them. The altered design shortened their sleeves and added feystones to their collars.

before

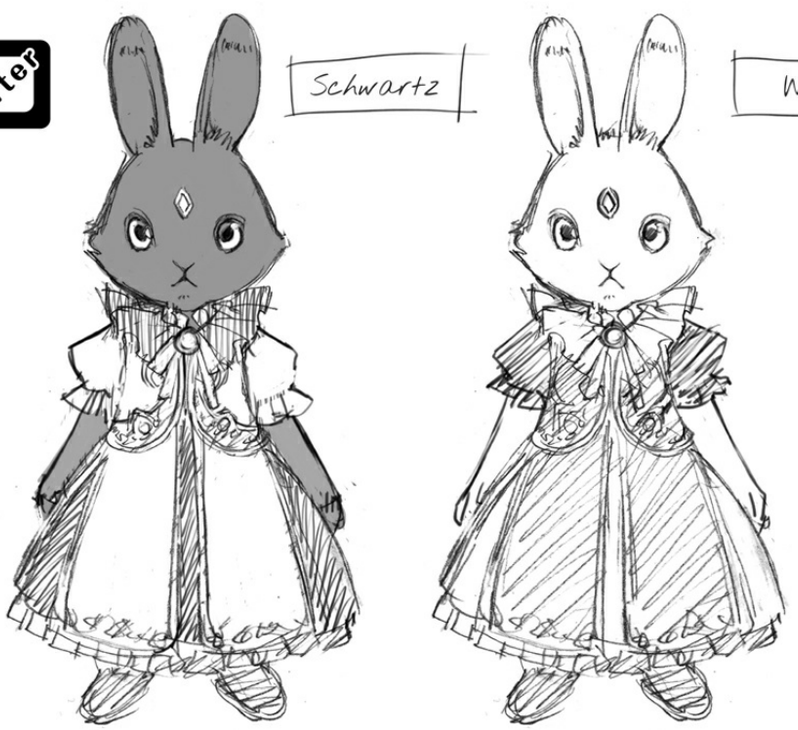


- Thick golden feystones on their foreheads
- Golden eyes

after

Schwartz

Weiss





Hartmut

14 years old
Hair: Vermilion
Eyes: Bright orange

Ottilie's youngest son.
About 175 centimeters tall

Brunhilde

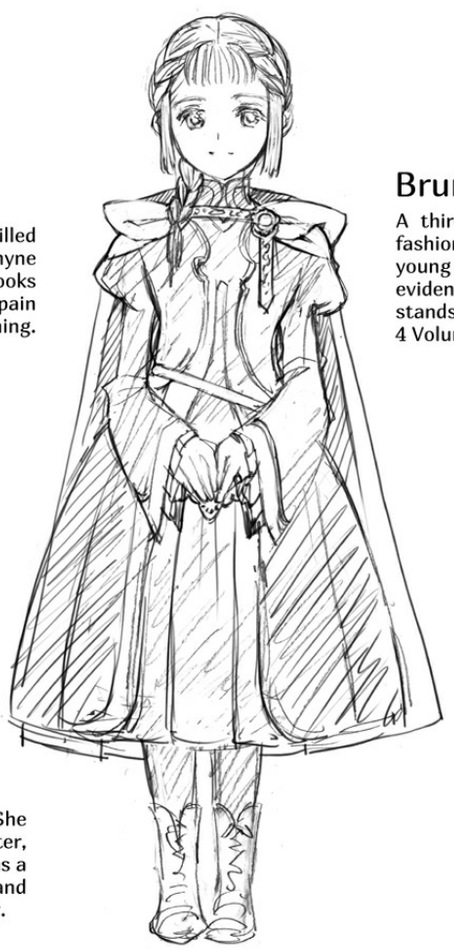
12 years old
Hair: Crimson
Eyes: Amber

About 157 centimeters tall
(160 when wearing
heeled shoes)



Hartmut

A fifth-year at the Royal Academy. He is skilled at gathering information and worships Rozemyne as a saint. According to Kazuki-sensei, he looks peaceful at first glance, but he can be a real pain in the neck once he starts raving about something.



Brunhilde

A third-year at the Royal Academy. She is fashionable and exudes the aura of a proper young lady, making her high status more than evident. Her distinctive red hair means she stands out in the colored illustration for Part 4 Volume 1.

Lieseleta

13 years old
Hair: Emerald green
Eyes: Dark green

About 155 centimeters tall
(158 when wearing
high-heeled boots)

Angelica's little sister

Lieseleta

A fourth-year at the Royal Academy. She resembles Angelica due to being her little sister, but her personality is much more refined: she has a quiet, observant air to her; she always smiles; and she does her work thoroughly and intellectually.

Detlinde

An archduke candidate from the greater duchy Ahrensbach. As one would expect from the daughter of Georgine, she is a beautiful but egotistical girl. She does not like Rozemyne.

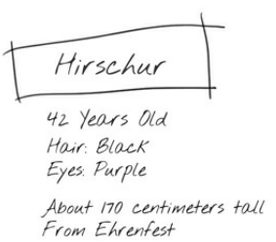


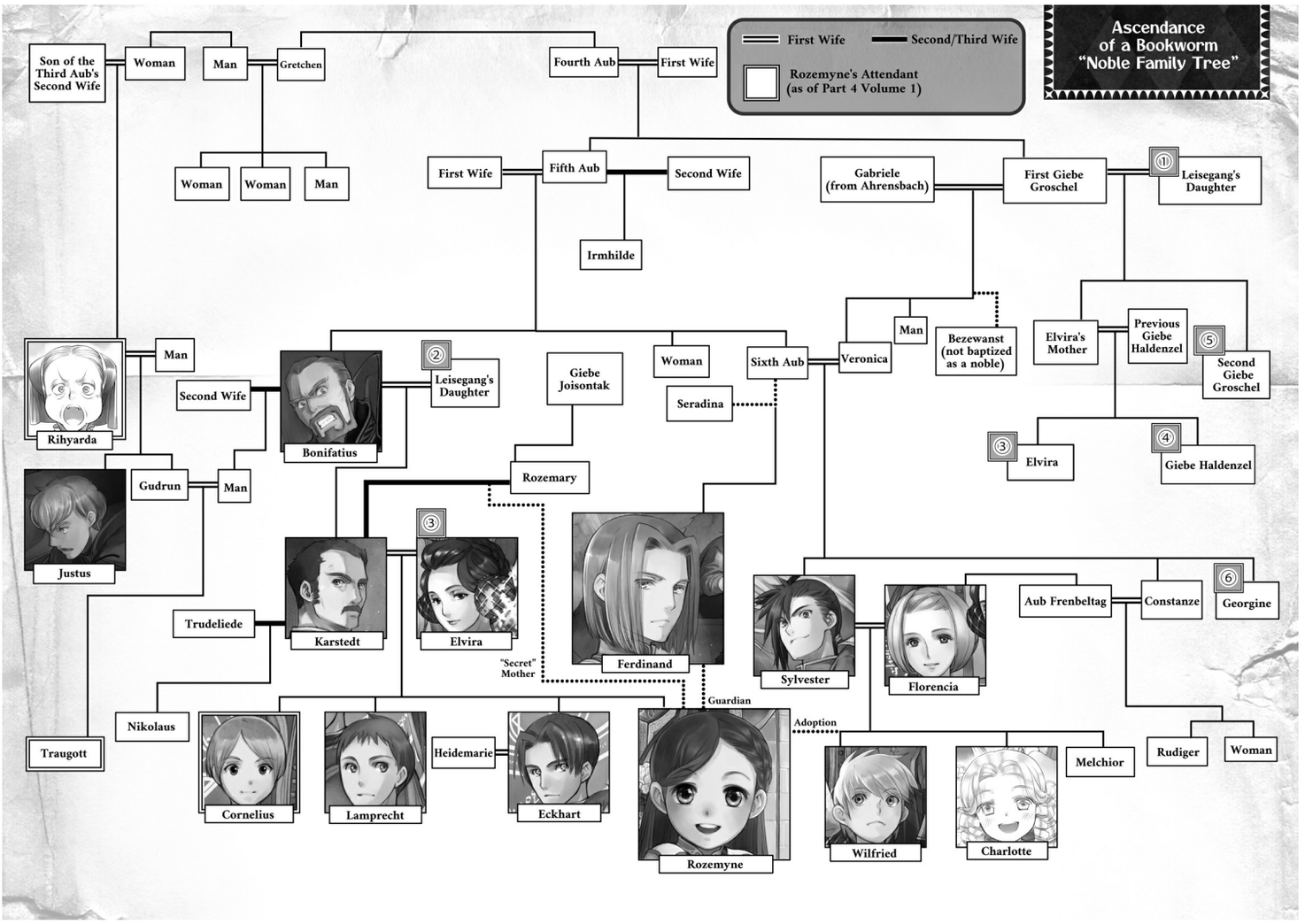


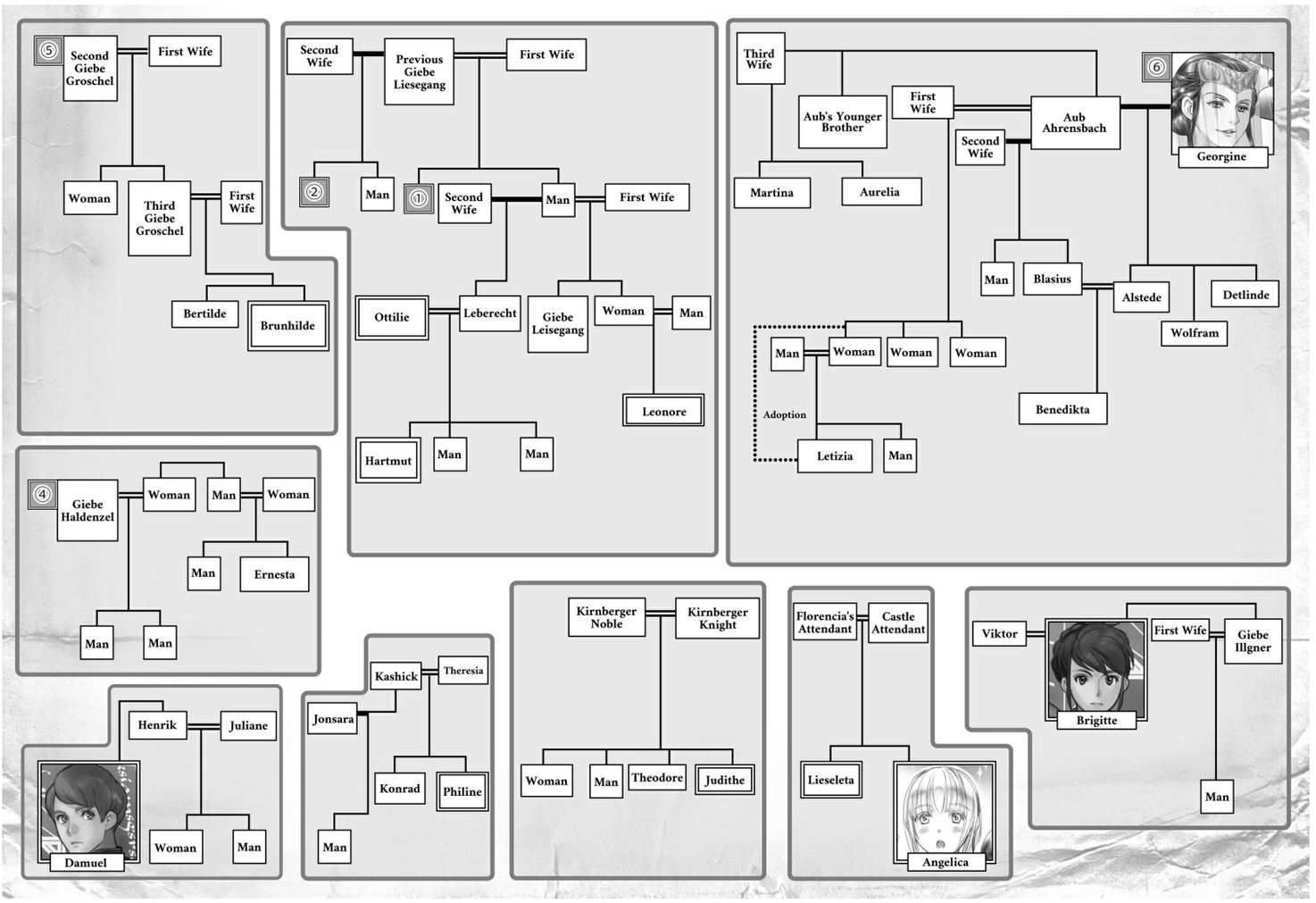


Hirschur

A dorm supervisor who's never actually at her dormitory. She's a mad scientist who is always absorbed in her research, and the sharpness she exudes makes it a lot more believable that she was once Ferdinand's teacher. The revised design added some waves to her hair.




Ascendance of a Bookworm "Noble Family Tree"
First Wife
Second/Third Wife
Rozemyne's Attendant (as of Part 4 Volume 1)
Son of the Third Aub's Second Wife
Woman
Man
Gretchen
Woman
Woman
Man
Fourth Aub
First Wife
First Wife
Fifth Aub
Second Wife
Irmhilde
Gabriele (from Ahrensbach)
First Giebe Groschel
① Leisegang's Daughter
Man
Rihyarda
Second Wife
Bonifatius
② Leisegang's Daughter
Giebe Joisontak
Woman
Seradina
Sixth Aub
Veronica
Man
Bezewanst (not baptized as a noble)
Elvira's Mother
Previous Giebe Haldenzel
⑤ Second Giebe Groschel
③ Elvira
④ Giebe Haldenzel
Gudrun
Man
Justus
Rozemary
③
Karstedt
Elvira
Ferdinand
"Secret" Mother
Sylvester
Florencia
Aub Frenbeltag
Constanze
⑥ Georgine
Trudeliede
Nikolaus
Traugott
Cornelius
Lamprecht
Heidemarie
Eckhart
Guardian
Rozemyne
Adoption
Wilfried
Charlotte
Melchior
Rudiger
Woman


⑤
Second Giebe Groschel
First Wife
Woman
Third Giebe Groschel
First Wife
Bertilde
Brunhilde
Second Wife
Previous Giebe Liesegang
First Wife
②
Man
①
Second Wife
Man
First Wife
Ottilie
Leberecht
Giebe Leisegang
Woman
Man
Leonore
Hartmut
Man
Man
Third Wife
Aub's Younger Brother
First Wife
Aub Ahrensbach
⑥
Georgine
Second Wife
Martina
Aurelia
Man
Blasius
Alstede
Detlinde
Wolfram
Man
Woman
Woman
Woman
Adoption
Letizia
Man
Benedikta
④
Giebe Haldenzel
Woman
Man
Woman
Man
Ernesta
Man
Man
Kirnberger Noble
Kirnberger Knight
Woman
Man
Theodore
Judithe
Florencia's Attendant
Castle Attendant
Lieseleta
Angelica
Viktor
First Wife
Giebe Illgner
Brigitte
Man
Henrik
Juliane
Damuel
Woman
Man
Kashick
Theresia
Jonsara
Konrad
Philine
Man

Q&A with Miya Kazuki

Here I'll be answering some of the questions I received from readers on my Narou page between July 11 and July 20, 2017. Just like before, I was surprised to see how many questions were asked about super-detailed things that I'd never thought anyone would care about. Once again, I have done my best to answer as many as possible.

Miya Kazuki

About the *Bookworm* World

Q: In Part 1, Gunther and Otto go drinking on their way home from work, but it was nighttime by that point and presumably dark out. Are there streetlamps in the lower city?

A: There are iron fire baskets on poles outside of stores, but the way home would generally be pitch-black unless you had your own torch or something to carry.

Q: I'd like to know what each of the five expenses on the temple's ledger refer to, namely divine will, offerings to the gods, flowers for the gods, water for the gods, and divine compassion. Divine will is described as being the greatest expense, so is that payment for the blue robes? I'm also interested in knowing how they differentiate sources of income. Do they write things like "budget from the archduke," "taxes," "the Harvest Festival," etc.?

A: On the expenses sheet, "divine will" refers to payment for the High Bishop and the blue robes. On income sheets, it refers to the budget received from the archduke. "Offerings to the gods" are for ceremonial expenses, so flowers, incense, cloth, *etc.* "Flowers for the gods" refers to clothing and other fashion expenses for the flower-offering gray shrine maidens, which originated from the cost of preparing the temple for noble visitors. "Water for the gods" refers to

hosting fees, such as wine, feasts, and the like. On the occasions when nobles would visit, those in the temple would get to enjoy the food as well, which led to priests actively trying to secure more visitors. “Divine compassion” refers to the expenses for the orphanage—robes for the priests, cleaning tools, *etc.*

Any income that doesn’t come from the archduke’s budget is referred to as a “gift from the gods.” These are differentiated using descriptions like: “Gift from X.”

Q: During the Healing Ritual in Part 2, Ferdinand declared that Myne is under his protection. How exactly was that statement understood by those present? Did they assume he planned to do something with her in the future and was warning others to keep away?

A: It didn’t have any kind of deeper meaning—he was quite simply saying that he would be acting as her guardian. Like, “If you wish to propose to her or some such, you must consult me. You may not do as you like with her.”

Q: Myne was baptized as Karstedt’s daughter, but from an outside perspective, that would mean she’d done apprentice work in the temple before being baptized. Isn’t that a big contradiction from a noble’s point of view? There’s also the point about how one can’t act publicly before being baptized, but she was helping the Knight’s Order. What groundwork and such did they need to establish to make that passable?

A: The work that Myne did was supposed to have been done by adults in the first place, and Sylvester and Karstedt had announced ahead of time that they were going to be bringing an underage apprentice to the ceremony for mana-related reasons. The knights simply ended up thinking: “Ah, I knew she was underage, but I didn’t realize they meant *that* underage.” The temple is understood to be a place for people who aren’t nobles, so they don’t really think too much about them doing things that aren’t considered noble-like.

Q: When Myne and Sylvester were attacked during Spring Prayer, it was shown that Devouring soldiers from Ahrensbach were involved. Does that mean

the duchy barrier doesn't react to those with as little mana as Devouring soldiers, and that they didn't have to pass through the border gate?

A: They passed through the border gate with their master to reach a certain Ehrenfest giebe and *then* they received orders to launch their attack. That was why the duchy barrier didn't react.

Q: From Sylvester's perspective, is he spoiling Myne more than his own children? Particularly considering that he lets her stay in the temple and still see her family sometimes.

A: He doesn't view it as spoiling her, since he assigned her to be the High Bishop and makes her participate in religious ceremonies. Leisegang nobles are certainly glaring daggers at him for having her stay in the temple though, so he does acknowledge that he's being at least a little selfless.

Q: In Part 3 Volume 1, when Lamprecht asks Ferdinand what happened to Rozemyne, Ferdinand avoids the question. But what did he say in the coming days?

A: Everyone was so caught up in the Rozemyne Faceplant Incident that nobody followed up on it. If someone were to ask him again, he would in turn ask about Lamprecht's shortcomings as a guard knight or about recent events to avoid answering. He had no intention of actually responding to anyone from the very beginning. (Hahaha.)

Q: Why did Ferdinand say "As expected" after seeing Rozemyne's baptism medal?

A: She had described the drink as being sweet when he peered into her memories, so he predicted that she has all the elemental attributes, much like he does himself. That prediction was only strengthened when she forcibly used her mana to give a blessing of all the elements to her family.

Q: Has Sylvester ever gone to the Italian Restaurant on his own? This includes any times he might have sneaked inside.

A: No. He can simply have his own chefs prepare the food in the castle, and since one needs an introduction to enter the restaurant, he wouldn't be able to sneak in. Rozemyne would also inevitably find out if Sylvester ever returned, and she has made it clear to him just how much of a pain that would be for her.

Q: If it went public that Myne hid those letters she thought were love letters, would she be punished for her crime? Or has Ferdinand already taken care of it?

A: Ferdinand has already taken care of it. He delivered them and simply said, "It seemed there were still more." As far as the public is concerned, they were never hidden to begin with.

Q: The standard fashion for nobles is to wear clothes with an excessive amount of cloth, with it being considered shameless to show one's legs, but what about Brigitte's dress? Is it okay to show bare shoulders, arms, etc.?

A: Rozemyne's mothers approved it, so there's no issue—there existed clothing without shoulders before Brigitte's dress, after all. That said, the initial debut of the dress at a faction tea party revealed that many thought the arms were too revealing, so that was adjusted a bit.

Q: In the Part 3 Volume 1 short story "One Stressed-Out Chef," the cake Leise brought was put in the winter prep room. But no matter how cold it might have been in there, it was still summertime. Would it have been fine to eat despite it being a mille-feuille made with cream?

A: The summers in Ehrenfest aren't the same as summers in Japan, and the winter prep room really is cold. It's a common storage area for those in the lower city. Also, it wasn't mille-feuille—it was mille crepe and sponge cake. And as indicated in the line about them making the finishing touches, cream hadn't been added yet.

Q: Are those who aren't knights taught to make armor from feystones? Wouldn't Myne's gathering have gone better if she had been taught?

A: It takes quite a lot of skill and experience to supply mana to one's highbeast, armor, *and* gathering tools all at once without a schtappe. Highbeasts are required for travel, and so that was prioritized instead. Maybe they might have taught her if she'd had more time to practice, but Rozemyne's schedule was becoming busier and busier, so they simply didn't have the chance. There wouldn't have been any helping that, anyway—the printing press is more important to her than armor.

Q: The average walking speed is four kilometers per hour, or thirty-two kilometers if one walks eight hours per day. Horses travel almost double that speed at sixty-two kilometers per day. It took several days to reach the Goddesses' Bath from Fontedorf, and if we assume the journey takes ten days by horse (or twenty days by foot) then we end up with a distance of 620 kilometers. Even if we account for snowy and mountain roads, that would mean there's an empty wasteland somewhere with a diameter of over two hundred kilometers. Could it be that the journey from Fontedorf didn't take several days by horse, but actually several hours?

A: This is an entirely different world, so such calculations aren't really applicable. First of all, they weren't traveling on paved roads, and rather than moving over gentle hills, they were going through a snowy forest at the base of a mountain, which slowed them down even more.

It's also important to keep in mind that the neighboring towns and farms were empty since everyone was gathered together in the winter mansions. Horses need rest just like humans do, but the absence of stagecoaches meant they couldn't be swapped out. And with no inns to stay in, the group had to spend the daylight hours searching for suitable campground, setting up camp, *etc.* Not to mention, given the season, there were fewer daylight hours than usual, which meant they had fewer than eight hours per day for travel. On top of that, feybeasts that might be short work for a single noble can end up taking several commoners much longer to defeat, especially when you take the laying of traps into consideration. Feybeast hunting takes up a lot of extra time, which further decreases how much one can travel in a day.

Also—and this is incredibly important since it's a Yurgenschmidt thing—their

destination being the Goddesses' Bath means the road will vary in complexity depending on the visitors' gifts and attitudes. Not everyone would travel the absolute shortest distance and reach their destination in the absolute shortest time as Rozemyne's group did.

Q: Prior to gathering her spring ingredient, Rozemyne and the temple group offered sweets to the statue. Did the sweets disappear after that, or did people eat them?

A: They vanished. Incidentally, the sweets that were spread out were eaten by small lights.

Q: Did the fantasy-like events of the Goddesses' Bath occur due to Flutrane's influence after all? Were the small lights being eaten the goddess's way of interacting with the world?

A: The Goddesses' Bath is a place where mana of the water element gathers more easily, and the tiny lights were mana clumps, which are a treat for feybeasts. Them being of the water element helps prayers reach the spring subordinate gods and allows the world to be more easily influenced.

Q: Lutz and the others ate river fish while living in Illgner. Was any served to Rozemyne during her stay, or was she not given any due to it being unidentifiable?

A: Fran and Monika were responsible for serving her meals, and so they only gave her food they deemed acceptable. Things they hadn't seen before, that didn't seem easy to eat with cutlery, or that would have been a problem for them as leftovers were not selected.

Q: What would happen to Wilfried if he got disowned?

A: He would be unable to remain as the archduke's son and would be sent to the temple to signify that he is no longer a noble. Naturally, he would no longer attend the Royal Academy. If he were to publicly defy Sylvester in Veronica's honor, a gentle punishment would be to send him to the Ivory Tower, while a

more fitting one would be to execute him alongside Veronica.

Q: Lamprecht had some uneasy thoughts after seeing Rozemyne's blessing at her debut. Is he not obligated to share them with Wilfried as his retainer?

A: Rozemyne was adopted due to her abundance of mana, and the blessing was a necessary move to show the nobles just how valuable she really is. Not to mention, it was the start of winter socializing—Wilfried's retainers needed to protect him while dealing with other nobles, and one wouldn't say anything to make their lord more depressed than he already was.

Q: Why is it that Wilfried looks forward to and enjoys spending time with his parents so much when, prior to his baptism, he spent almost all of his time with Veronica? Veronica seems like the type of person who wouldn't praise anyone but Sylvester and Wilfried himself; surely she fed him all sorts of negative things about Florencia.

A: Do you not have any relatives whom you don't see very often but always look forward to meeting up with because they always shower you with love when you're together? Wilfried saw his grandmother as his main family, with his parents being more distant relatives, but he always looked forward to seeing them.

It's the joy of a noblewoman to phrase insults in a way that makes them sound perfectly harmless. If Wilfried had sharper senses or had been a little more mature, perhaps he might have realized that Veronica's words were always laced with hate and cynicism.

Q: Why didn't Wilfried start to panic about Rozemyne causing so many revolutions?

A: Despite all the wealth her revolutions bring to Ehrenfest, Rozemyne is doing it all for her own purposes. Wilfried was more focused on making up for what he lacked than getting involved in the hobbies of others.

Q: Why was Wilfried's reeducation handled so poorly? Florencia finally

regained the opportunity to raise him and yet she doesn't appear to do much with it. I don't think her being too busy is a good excuse either. Did they assume it was fine to leave things so half-baked because he was already good enough as an archduke candidate?

A: Florencia isn't to blame for her son's half-baked teaching—his head attendant Oswald is. Entering the northern building puts someone in a state of semi-isolation, so the most Florencia could do was check up on him at regular intervals. The main priority when it comes to learning is checking whether the person can do certain things. Wilfried was fixed up right before his debut, but in terms of actual knowledge, he remained far behind. He could play one harspiel song but nothing more, for example.

Q: If Rozemyne hadn't told Wilfried that Veronica was the true criminal, when would he have found out? It seemed like Charlotte had already been informed by her own retainers. Did they delay telling Wilfried to prioritize educating him for his debut and firing his existing retainers?

A: They were planning on waiting until everything had calmed down, so... maybe before he left for the Royal Academy? It ultimately would have depended on Sylvester. Florencia was unable to tell Wilfried because she would have invariably gotten emotional, which could have harmed their relationship moving forward.

Charlotte was able to deduce it because Florencia rejoiced over Veronica's arrest. Florencia, for her part, felt guilty that she was relieved while her husband was so distraught over having to punish his own mother.

Q: Florencia had Hartmut's father (Giebe Leisegang's half-brother, sharing a father) among her retainers, so why didn't she know anything about Wilfried's education? I suppose Veronica just didn't tell anyone anything.

A: It's not like she knew nothing at all. She was aware that he was lagging behind in the same way that Sylvester did through regular reports. What surprised them was just how terrible the true state of affairs really was. She had believed Sylvester maybe seventy percent when he had said that he used to be

the same as Wilfried, and she just assumed that, with Veronica raising him, Wilfried would end up as educated as his father. This belief was highly influenced by Florencia's thinking that this was just standard behavior for members of the Ehrenfest archducal family.

Also, neither Wilfried's retainers nor Veronica disclosed any details about Wilfried's education. Would you if you were in their position? "Your son is such a failure that we are planning to get rid of him alongside Lady Veronica. We will raise either Lady Charlotte or Lord Melchior to be the next aub, so give up on Lord Wilfried."

Q: As of Part 3, what do Cornelius and Angelica think of Damuel? They may have all known each other for a while by that point, but surely they'd have some thoughts on a laynoble being a retainer and receiving instructions for all the guard knights before anyone else. Or do they think nothing of him, assuming that he'll be removed from service before long?

A: Brigitte accepted Damuel receiving instructions in the temple because he was used to the environment and she wasn't. At times, she ended up frustrated with him, but she kept this to herself. Angelica has heartfelt respect for Damuel because she knows she wouldn't have passed her classes without him. Cornelius is generally just in awe that Damuel so politely and diligently keeps up with Rozemyne's unreasonable expectations.

Q: It seems to me that Damuel is better at doing simple desk work and following unreasonable demands from his superiors than normal scholars. Is he better at scholar work than Henrik, the actual scholar of the family?

A: Damuel was trained by Ferdinand in a situation where failure would quite literally cost him his life, so he was forced to become better whether he liked it or not. In some ways, the temple is the epitome of an evil corporation.

Q: During the Rozemyne rescue operation, Ferdinand says, "To think they would use *that* of all things..." about a potion. Is it a potion that hinders the flow of mana?

A: Yes. If you change the flow of mana using a potion, the person won't be able to use their mana like they usually do, which prevents them from counterattacking. The potions are convenient enough that even a commoner could carry them around.

Q: How much of an impact does mental fortitude have on the effectiveness of the Rozemyne Compression Method? What would the before/after look like for Sylvester, Karstedt, and Ferdinand?

A: There's a lot more to it than just knowing the mana compression method. Just like when women find efficient exercise-based diets, it largely depends on how serious they are about it, how strictly they adhere to it, and how long they keep it up for. My answer to your second question would vary pretty drastically depending on when exactly "after" is.

Q: I wanted to ask about the management of the parchment copies of magic contracts. The parchment for guild-related contracts was in a room that Freida could access. What kind of room are Ehrenfest contracts stored in? I would think the scholar in charge of them would have to be very high-ranking and able to deal with tight security. Are they bound by a magic contract too? Also, I'm curious about whether the country-wide contracts about the Rozemyne Compression Method are stored in a room inside the Royal Academy or whether they're somewhere else in the Sovereignty.

A: Magic contracts simply burn up and disappear, so there are no copies unless someone goes out of their way to make them. Commoners who use magic contracts for business purposes—Benno included—are required to bring copies to the Merchant's Guild, which is why there was a room there dedicated to them. Magic contracts between nobles are different, however. There's a storeroom for those deeply involved with the running of the duchy that normal scholars manage, but not all of them have to go there. The proper magic tools for the Rozemyne Compression Method contracts were ordered, but there was no obligation to send copies anywhere.

Q: Did Georgine become the first wife of Ahrensbach through subterfuge, or

was it just a coincidence?

A: The first wife of Ahrensbach is not such a trivial position that one can assume it by chance.

Q: Is there anyone other than Rihyarda who doesn't believe Rozemyne is Karstedt's child?

A: No—only those very close to Karstedt are able to notice his subtle tells when he lies. His mother might have noticed, were she still alive.

Q: Does Bonifatius truly believe that Rozemyne is his blood-related granddaughter?

A: He doesn't think she's Elvira's child, but he does at least believe that Karstedt is her father.

Q: I know that all nobles make and carry their own jureve around, but do they also have a full bathtub of the stuff in their hidden rooms?

A: Knights and such store them because they serve as their lifeline.

Q: Rozemyne initially didn't realize that two years had passed when she woke up from her jureve because Ferdinand hadn't changed at all. Why didn't he look any older?

A: A lot of growth happens between the years of eight and ten, or thirteen and fifteen, but this isn't really the case for a twenty-two-year-old turning twenty-four. In fact, Ferdinand looked his oldest when Myne first met him, since that was when he was being completely drained of mana and having to endure an exhausting amount of work. Now that I think about it, that's probably how he looked when Rozemyne woke up. (Hahaha.)

Q: How did Ferdinand feel when Rozemyne finally woke up safely after two years in the jureve?

A: “Awake at last, I see. Fool. You were away for much too long. Good grief... You certainly are a handful.”

Q: What is Lord Ferdinand’s birth season and mana color?

A: Publicly, his birth season is spring. His mana has all the elemental attributes, so it’s pretty much pure white like a pearl... but since there isn’t much bias for any one element, the color ends up pretty faint.

Q: It seems to me that Ferdinand is trusting Myne’s chefs somewhat blindly. Should he not be on guard against them, even if they’re commoners?

A: He didn’t trust them from the start—he closely examined the situation when Myne spoke about her lower city connections and recommended the food that her chefs made. To be honest, it would be more accurate to say that he trusts the judgment of his former attendant Fran rather than her chefs.

Q: If attendants need their own attendants, how did Ferdinand live before entering the temple when he could only trust Justus? Justus must have had his own retainers and servants, and I assume Ferdinand wouldn’t be able to trust them.

A: Just as Rihyarda’s attendants don’t make themselves known or interact with Rozemyne, Justus’s attendants and servants would never interact with Ferdinand unless he explicitly went to Justus’s estate. Attendants and servants only move between family members—like married couples, parents and children, *etc.* The main duty of Justus’s attendants is to keep his living environment in order, so their work never required them to be seen by Ferdinand.

Q: I thought Ferdinand gave up on marriage when he went to the temple, but his father gave him an estate to live with a potential future wife. What did he think about that? I recall him always mentioning to Myne that it is the duty of nobles to produce children, but he seems to be neglecting that duty himself...

A: He likely would have married someone had a suitable partner existed—

there simply weren't any houses with enough mana to match his own, nor was anyone willing to accept him while Veronica was in power. He said all that to Myne because her position in noble society was weak in more ways than one, and getting married and subsequently having children would have brought her safety. Women who have a great deal of mana and can bear children are treated quite well.

Q: Why didn't Ferdinand kill Veronica with poison or something?

A: Veronica was his father's wife; it would have been too risky for Ferdinand to kill her while his father was still alive. Subsequently, killing her around the time his father died would have been considered a declaration of war against Sylvester. Ferdinand joined the temple during that period, and it would have been far from wise to throw Ehrenfest into a panic after having withdrawn from politics—especially considering that there were overwhelmingly more nobles benefiting from Veronica than there were nobles benefiting from Ferdinand. He could have gone rogue and assassinated her on his own, but he wouldn't have done something so reckless.

Q: When Ferdinand returned to noble society, it was said that no unmarried woman had a mana quantity compatible with his own. There was, however, one married woman. Was it Florencia?

A: It was Veronica. She's the child of an Ahrensbach archduke candidate and the first-generation Giebe Groschel, who was at the time considered the most suitable person in Ehrenfest to become aub.

Q: I would like to know about Baron Blon. Given that he's a baron, he must be a laynoble, but has he ever asked the Gilberta Company to introduce him to Rozemyne?

A: Nobles may recommend stores to each other, but commoner merchants are never put in intermediary situations where they introduce one noble to another. If the relationship soured, the merchant would be putting themselves at risk of being executed. Merchants live long only by interacting with noble

society as little as possible.

Q: Freida signed a concubine contract with the laynoble Henrik, but due to her connection with Rozemyne, she ends up being in the presence of Aub Ehrenfest himself. If her contract continues as planned and she ends up a concubine kept out of sight, wouldn't that be considered a slight against the archduke? I assume Henrik's social position would be damaged as a result.

A: Why would it be rude when the archduke hasn't ordered the signed contract to be nullified? It was the chefs who made the food, not Freida, and on top of that, Sylvester doesn't even know about Henrik's contract with her. Even if Sylvester did know, it's normal for commoners to become concubines, so he wouldn't consider it something that he needs to interfere with. The contract would ultimately be left alone.

Q: We already know that the Pandabus recreates the steering wheel, pedals, seat belts, and such, but does it recreate glass windows too?

A: The windows aren't made of glass, but a membrane of mana that's transparent and can be seen through while driving. Since the whole highbeast is a stretched-out stone to begin with, Rozemyne isn't really concerned about what the materials are.

Q: Myne's artistic sense is insulted at every turn. Is that because cartoonish art isn't normal in Yurgenschmidt, or because her art really is bad and she just doesn't realize it?

A: Both. Those in Yurgenschmidt struggle to accept her art because there's no culture for the cartoony style, and as for her artistic sense, well... To give an analogy, it would be like someone on Earth today creating a cartoonish cockroach and driving around in it. Those who like bugs may find it amusing, but no matter how cartoonish it gets, most people won't accept it. The problem becomes not whether the cartoonish style is cute or not, but rather why one would choose a cockroach in the first place. Everyone would essentially be like, "Why a cockroach?! Please, go with a rabbit or something instead!"

Q: Rozemyne sometimes thinks that she'll be killed if she opposes Sylvester or Ferdinand, but what would they actually do if she defied them? Say she began seriously trying to become Aub Ehrenfest, for example.

A: If Sylvester's own son would be punished for treason by being sent to the temple or being executed, then a former commoner like Rozemyne would undoubtedly lose her life. Ferdinand would take responsibility for having made Rozemyne a noble by using a loophole in the magic contract to execute her. Alternatively, if Ferdinand was unable to perform this duty for some reason, one of the archduke's retainers who didn't sign the magic contract would do it.

Q: There are several border gates across Ehrenfest, but how much traffic do the ones to Klassenberg and Ahrensbach actually see?

A: The gate between Klassenberg and Ehrenfest sees almost no traffic because those in Klassenberg view Ehrenfest as irrelevant. The gates to Frenbeltag and Ahrensbach, however, do see some traffic from merchants and nobles. Outsider nobles were forbidden from entering the Noble's Quarter in Part 2, but despite the Ehrenfest leaders' concerns, they didn't forbid travel through the duchy in general.

Q: What do people in Yurgenschmidt think of swimming and bathing suits? Are knights the only ones who learn to swim, presumably as part of their training?

A: People don't have opportunities to swim in the duchies that don't border oceans, so there's no real reason for them to learn. As for the bathing suits, if anyone went outside wearing one, everyone would just think, "How shameless!" Knights remain fully armored even when entering bodies of water.

Q: Both noble and commoner women change their hairstyles and the length of their skirts as they grow older, but do men change their clothing or such as they age?

A: Male commoners and nobles wear shorts until they turn ten, but from that

point onward, they wear the same styles as adults. There aren't really any clear changes like there are with women. In the past, when one only obtained their schtappe after reaching adulthood, they were given magic weapons at the age of ten.

Q: Are there any feybeasts other than shumils that lower city commoners are able to hunt? Perhaps the young of certain feybeasts?

A: Naturally, shumils aren't the only feybeasts they can hunt. They go after the young of some feybeasts, as you say, but the fun ends when the parent feybeasts come out.

Q: Say Myne gathered a parue from a tree—would she get a special parue dyed with her mana?

A: If she gripped the fruit rather than the branch and poured her mana into it, she would get a feystone, not a parue.

Q: If Myne had regularly drained her mana by gathering parues and participating in the Star Festival, could she have survived without becoming an apprentice shrine maiden?

A: She has more mana than could be managed like that, so she would have died before coming of age—probably around ten years old at the latest. She might have even been detained as some kind of dangerous trombe-making person and executed. If you think about how Gunther would have felt having to arrest his own daughter, we can be thankful that she was able to join the temple.

Q: Were recipe books already available before Rozemyne started making and selling them, or are books considered too rare and valuable for that kind of thing?

A: Most chefs are commoners, so it's safe to assume they're illiterate. Also, even if a noble went into their kitchen, the chefs wouldn't be able to give them detailed recipes or anything. No other recipe books exist as a result; chefs just

learn how to make good food at home or observe others cooking and steal their techniques. Some families of chefs have diaries in which they make notes like, “I did X and it worked well,” but the whole recipe is never listed.

Q: If commoners continue to eat Rozemyne’s cooking, will more of them develop the Devouring? As others have stated, Rozemyne’s cooking methods will have an impact on the mana quantity of nobles—well, in the veeery long term, at least—so will the same happen to commoners?

A: If a family continues to eat the food for several generations then it will have some impact, but it’ll be trivial compared to how much more mana one gets from the compression method.

Q: Is there a reason why Schutzaria’s shield only blocks people who bear malice toward Rozemyne, rather than anyone Rozemyne doesn’t want to enter?

A: Because anyone who fails to enter Schutzaria’s shield will very likely die, and Rozemyne sees that as a pretty extreme punishment for those who aren’t actively trying to harm her. That’s also why she normally only uses the shield in very dangerous situations. During such times, Rozemyne will even allow those she doesn’t particularly like into her shield, so long as they have no malicious intent.

Q: Myne automatically learned some of the language spoken in Ehrenfest when she reincarnated; is she still relying on that auto-translation now that she’s a noble? It seems like she’s envisioning Earth numbers and then writing them in the Yurgenschmidt language.

A: The only words that Myne automatically picked up were those one would expect a sickly five-year-old who spends all day in bed to know, which means she was at most able to communicate with her family. There was a ton that she didn’t know and needed to learn herself. She memorized numbers by looking at the written prices of various goods and thinking things like, “This is zero! This is three!”

Q: Being able to find the entrance to the castle amid a blizzard seems unreasonable, even assuming that people have magnetic sensors or something. What method do you imagine they use to find their way?

A: It's related to feeling mana—that's why only the adults are allowed to do outside work during this period, like hunting the Lord of Winter. Also, knights are trained to manipulate the mana of surrounding enemies, so they're more sensitive to mana than most.

Q: Retainers address each other without titles like "lord" and "lady" because they're coworkers, right?

A: Yes. Incidentally, when meeting with a noble of an unknown rank from another duchy for the first time, it is customary to default to "lord" or "lady."

Q: Are children not assigned scholars before attending the Royal Academy? We've known about Rozemyne and Wilfried having attendants and guard knights for a while, but I don't think any scholars have been mentioned.

A: Nobles need the services of attendants and guard knights from the moment they're born, but not so much the services of scholars. People only select scholars following their baptism.

Q: Where are Yurgenschmidt coins made? There are designs on the coins in the manga version, but are those something Suzuka-sama made on her own?

A: They're made in the Sovereignty. The designs are Suzuka-sama originals.

Q: Do children of the archduke have any opportunities to spend time with children their age, other than siblings of the same mother?

A: Sometimes, if children of relatives on the mother's side of the family are in the same duchy, or if their parents' highly trusted friends have children. Generally speaking though, it's difficult due to the status imbalance.

Q: I know that nobles have last names, but what would they be when formally written out? I would particularly like to know the full names for Myne, Sylvester, Elvira, Damuel, and Giebe Illgner.

A: Rozemyne Tochter Linkberg Adotie Ehrenfest. Sylvester Aub Ehrenfest. Elvira Tochter Gutheil Frau Linkberg. Damuel Sohn Bernett. Helfried Armbos Giebe Illgner.

Q: Why is Karstedt an archnoble despite being Bonifatius's son? Are all children of archduke candidates archnobles by default?

A: When the next archduke hasn't been decided, the children of archduke candidates are also raised as archduke candidates in the event that one of their parents becomes the aub, since their parents would subsequently need a successor. Despite another aub having been selected, his children were all girls and he did not plan on taking a second wife, so Karstedt remained an archduke candidate until Sylvester was born. That is why he is an archnoble now.

Q: On average, how differently are the children of a first wife and the children of a second wife treated?

A: There is no average, since it depends on the father's personality, the relationship between mothers, the influence of the mothers' families, the children's mana capacity and talent, *etc.* In the event of the first wife being extremely powerful, the children of the second wife are basically ignored. Likewise, if the second wife marries in from a more powerful family, her children will be prioritized. That said, this all changes depending on the house in question and the generation. Had Veronica's influence continued for another ten years, Elvira's children likely would have been ostracized, with Nikolaus becoming the family's successor.

Q: There seems to be a system of men having multiple wives, but is the reverse also true? Do female aubs ever have two or more husbands? And do the husbands of female aubs ever have second or third wives?

A: It's rare, but sometimes female aubs do have multiple husbands. The

husbands of female aubs never have second or third wives, although they do have concubines.

Q: How are noble children with too little mana to be taken into the family treated after becoming servants? Are they isolated from their parents and siblings?

A: They wouldn't undergo a noble baptism, so they would publicly be equivalent to commoners. Whether they continue to interact with their parents and siblings depends on their family, but since they're servants, there will inevitably be a master-servant relationship.

Q: Do commoners or nobles ever have twins, triplets, etc.? It feels as though it would be a rare occurrence, since commoners lack the stamina and nobles have mana problems, but do they exist in Yurgenschmidt?

A: They do exist, and things are just as you imagine. It's rare for their births to be safe among commoners due to stamina and nutrition issues, and in the case of nobles, twins and the like are born with less mana, so they are rarely raised as nobles. Both twins tend to become servants for their family.

Q: What happens to the medal and citizenship of commoners who marry someone from another duchy?

A: Commoners living in the lower city send the temple a request for an interduchy marriage during the Star Festival. When the priests have an opportunity to process it, they give a letter of invitation to one of the merchants who regularly visit the temple. The commoner will then bring this letter with them on the day they are summoned to the temple (either the winter coming of age ceremony or the spring baptism ceremony) and receive their medal. Those living in the Central District or in the land of giebes give their moving request to the priests visiting them for the Harvest Festival, and they will then be given their medal at the next Spring Prayer.

Citizenship is attached to the medal, so anyone who loses their medal will also lose their citizenship, their home, and their job all at once. They will need to

move to the duchy of their marriage partner at once and deliver the registration fee to a priest during the next Star Festival. The whole process is quite tedious, so no commoner marries someone from another duchy unless one sees an enormous benefit in doing so.

Q: What are the duchy medals like for traveling merchants?

A: They're traveling merchants precisely because they don't belong to a duchy. They have no medals, nor do they get baptized, have coming of age ceremonies, or receive graves when they pass away.

Q: I have a question about hidden rooms—does the size of the room have to do with the creator's mana? Ferdinand's hidden room is absolutely crammed with stuff, so I had to wonder if all nobles have hidden rooms of the same size, whether they be laynobles or archduke candidates.

A: The space is created using mana, so it does depend on one's mana quantity. One can choose how big their room is when they initially make it, but after that, its size cannot be altered. Ferdinand made his on the smaller side because he never intended to allow anyone else inside. Also, at the time, he didn't intend for his hidden room in the temple to accumulate so much stuff. He has an estate in the Noble's Quarter, after all.

Q: How many places like the Ivory Tower are there? Is the tower Veronica is being kept in a special one that holds only her? Where is Count Toad being kept?

A: The Ivory Tower is for imprisoning members of the archducal family, but there is nobody else detained there at the moment. Count Bindewald is being kept in a jail for noble criminals.

Q: I understand that the disastrous state of the orphanage was the result of so many blue priests leaving following the purge, but in that case, what was the temple like before the purge?

A: When Bezewanst's reign over the temple was at its best, flower offerings

were at an all-time high. Even the blue shrine maidens had many lovers of carnality among them, since they had no expectations of ever leaving the temple.

Q: Does Ehrenfest have a red-light district, or any other form of prostitution as a business?

A: For nobles, that would be the temple's flower offerings. In the lower city, waitresses fulfill that role, which is what Ella hated and ran away from.

Q: Is the baseline mana quantity of each noble rank different between greater duchies such as Ahrensbach and middle duchies such as Ehrenfest? For example, do mednobles in Ahrensbach have as much mana as archnobles in Ehrenfest?

A: The average mana quantity per noble rank is roughly the same, since any great disparities would impact Royal Academy lessons. The greatest change between greater and middle duchies is the number of people in each rank, which in turn changes what is deemed valuable. Mednobles are entrusted with mednoble work, and those among the top end of the laynoble rank may find it easier to live.

Q: I believe nobles shape feystones by visualizing things they've seen before. Does that mean all the animals used for highbeasts actually exist?

A: A clear image is necessary so yes, they use animals that actually exist.

Q: What was winter socializing like the year Elvira published that book containing the Ferdinand illustrations?

A: They weren't sold officially through the Plantin Company, but stealthily by Elvira at tea parties. The last thing anybody wanted was for the books to be taken away like the illustrations were, so nobody speaks a word about them outside the tea parties. This contributed to the strengthening of the faction.

Q: What duchy was Georgine's former betrothed from, and what was their relationship like? What did she think of him?

A: He was an archduke candidate of the duchy formerly known as Zausengas, and the son of a third wife. It was a normal political marriage, and while there was no love in the relationship, Georgine knew that he would support her when she became aub, so she liked him about as much as she liked any other noble in her faction.

Q: How did Justus meet his wife, what kind of person was she, why did they divorce, and did they have children? Is there any chance he might remarry in the future?

A: It's important for nobles to marry for the sake of their house, and since Justus was just wandering around noncommittally, his parents eventually found a partner for him—a girl of the Veronica faction. When Justus resolved to serve Ferdinand, he divorced her largely in fear that she might indirectly bring harm to Ferdinand.

They had children, but since Justus didn't attend their baptism as a father, they aren't officially his. As for remarrying, well... who knows? He's past the prime marrying age, and he doesn't really care about getting married himself, so the woman in question would need to be very pushy with him to make it happen.

Q: When one comes of age and becomes able to sense those with an equivalent amount of mana, do the people they sense also have to be of age?

A: Yes, both people need to be of age to be able to sense the other's mana. Also, they can only sense mana quantity. To check someone's attributes, they would need to look at the color of their mana.

Q: In the previous fanbook, you mentioned that anyone's potion would taste sweet to Myne because she has the Devouring. Does that mean even a laynoble could use the memory-searching magic tool and easily synchronize with her?

A: Her mana would be dyed rapidly if mana were to be poured into her,

regardless of whether she drank the synchronization potion that makes mana easier to dye. If the mana was from another person, there'd be a little more resistance, but it wouldn't stop the dyeing process.

Q: Are there 365 days in a Yurgenschmidt year? Likewise, is each day twenty-four hours long?

A: There are 420 days in a year, but there are twenty-four hours in a day to make things easier for me to keep track of.

Q: I'm curious about the calendar. The term "month" is often used, but how many days are there in a month? How many months are there in a year? Do the lengths of months change if Schutzaria excels and preserves the autumn for as long as possible, or if Flutrane devotes her all to ending the winter a bit sooner?

A: There are seven days in a week: Waterday, Sproutday, Fireday, Leafday, Winday, Fruitday, and Earthday. Then there are five weeks in a month: the Week of Water, the Week of Fire, the Week of Wind, the Week of Earth, and the Week of Life. The seasons change every three months on average, but as you imagine, the autumn extends when Schutzaria does better, and the winter shortens when Flutrane does better, so the length of seasons varies each year.

Q: Are calendar dates a thing in the Bookverse? When making plans, people always talk about things being "X number of days from now," but they never seem to specify dates. There are seasons, so surely people have some way to tell when the season is about to change. Do they have calendars that show when the days of the baptism ceremonies and such are?

A: Rather than using dates like we're used to, people might plan around something occurring on "the next Week of Water's Sproutday." They do have objects that are similar to calendars, though. Few commoners have them for personal reasons, but almost all workplaces have them to indicate when the next Earthday is, since Earthday is the official day off. The calendars are boards with five rows of seven holes, with a wooden peg moved from hole to hole each day to indicate the day of the week. When seasons change, the color of time-

keeping bells are changed to the divine color of that season as an indication.

Q: In the first fanbook, you mentioned that you write what you want to write, but do you also visualize who you want to read it?

A: I've never tried to cater to a theoretical person or demographic. I didn't even plan for my writing to end up in print! My three main concerns are whether I'm writing something that I want to write, whether I'm writing something that my husband says is entertaining, and whether I'm writing something that I'm fine with my children reading when they grow up.

About Miya Kazuki

Q: I would like to ask what Suzuka-sensei and the editor think about Kazuki-sensei.

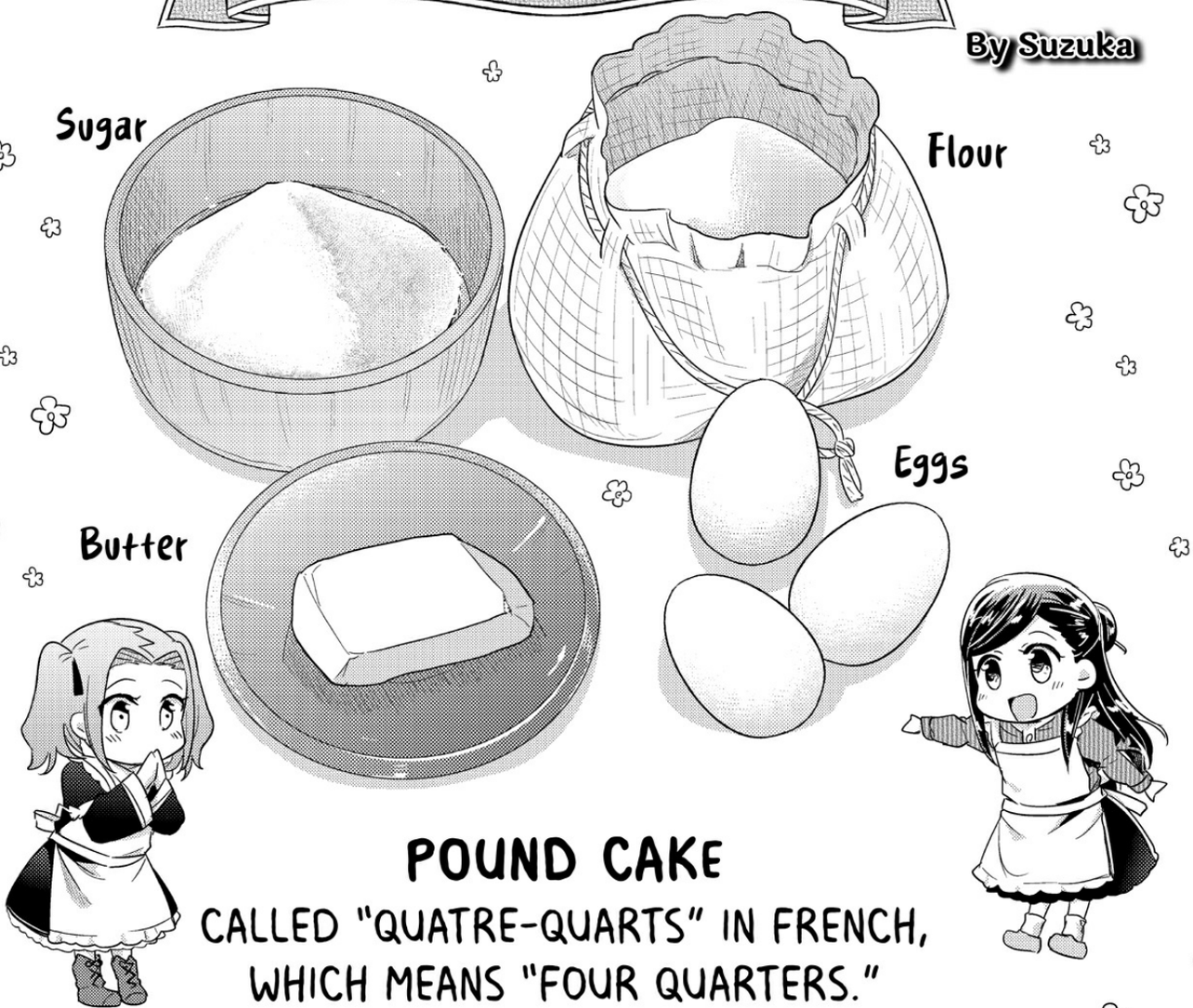
A (Suzuka): My first impression was that she's very stoic and consistent, and after meeting her in person, I've also started to think that she's cute and funny. I want to peek inside her head just one time and see how her world develops in her mind. Maybe with the memory-viewing magic tool... No? Darn.

A (editor): She's passionate about her goals like Rozemyne, and calculating in her decisions like Ferdinand. I just want to do my best serving her like a retainer!

Fanbook 2 Original Manga

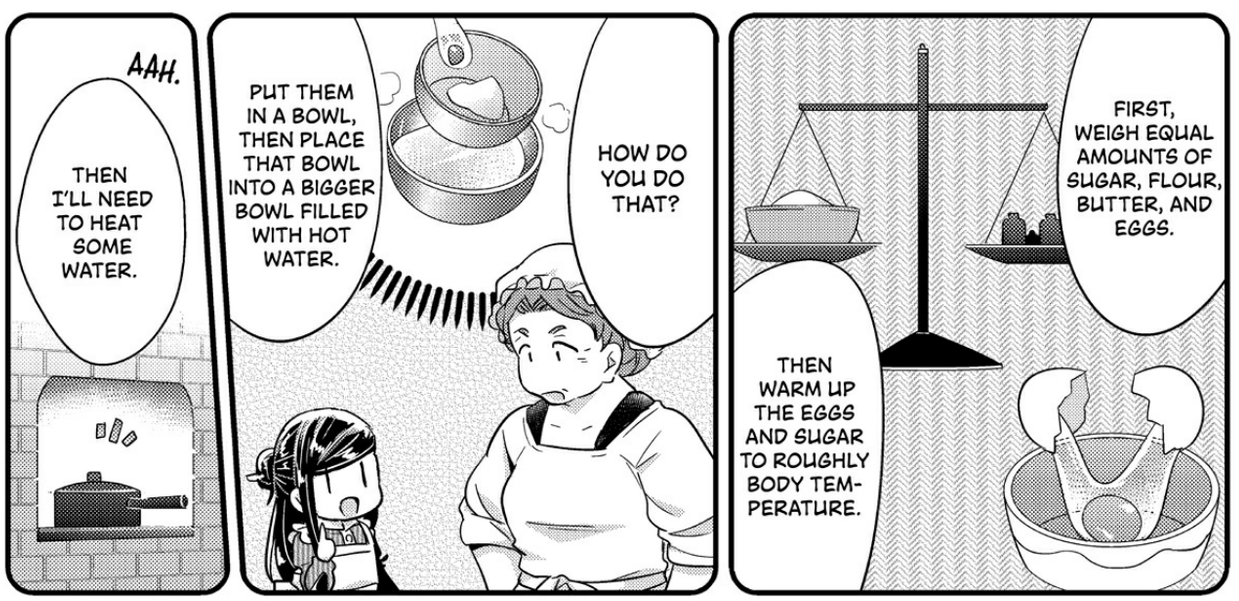
Let's Make Pound Cake!

By Suzuka



POUND CAKE

CALLED "QUATRE-QUARTS" IN FRENCH, WHICH MEANS "FOUR QUARTERS."

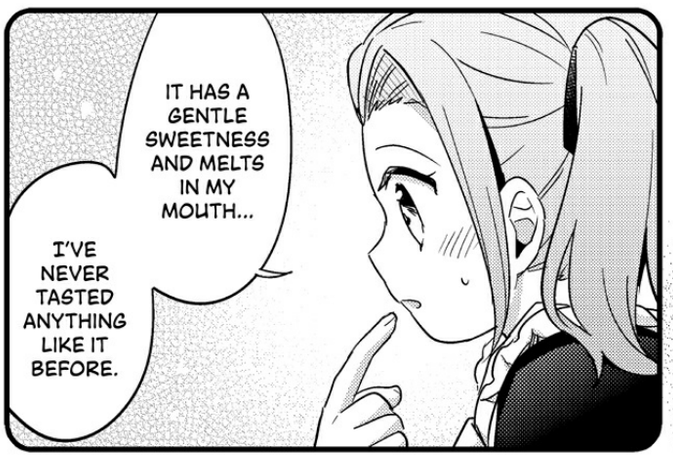



THE MOST IMPORTANT PART IS WHISKING THE EGGS AND SUGAR TOGETHER.
MAKE SURE TO KEEP GOING UNTIL THE MIXTURE IS THICK AND STICKY.
WHISK
MM. STICKY, HUH?
WHISK
OH, YES!
BEAM
WANT TO TRY, MISTRESS FREIDA?
WHI...SK...
WHISK
WHISK
OOH!
THE EGGS HAVE GONE FROM YELLOW TO WHITE!

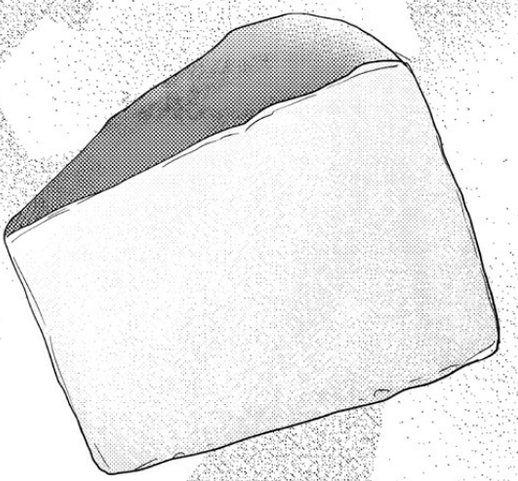

SADNESS
NEXT WE SIFT THE FLOUR ON TOP.
MAKING SWEETS IS NO EASY TASK...
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
SHAKE
SHAKE
YOU BOTH SURE ARE WEAK, HUH?
I can't feel my arms anymore.
LEISE, PLEASE TAKE MY PLACE.
Good grief.
CHOP
BE CAREFUL NOT TO DO THIS TOO MUCH OR IT WON'T RISE PROPERLY. YOU REALLY HAVE... TO...
CHOP
STICK
THEN WE USE A WOODEN SPATULA TO CUT AND FOLD THE BATTER.

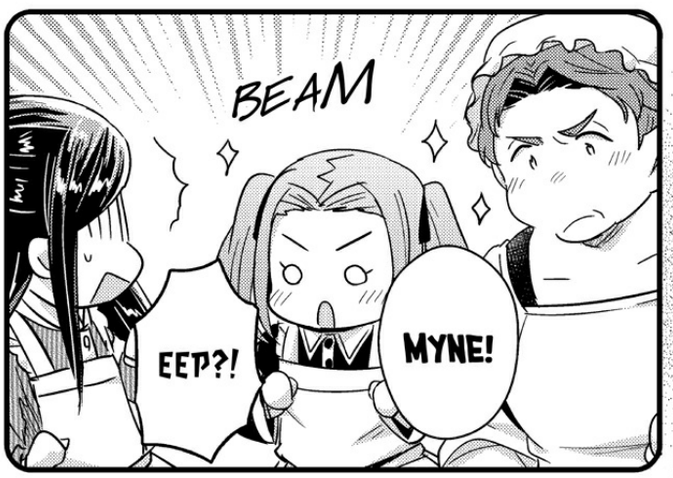

Bear in mind there's no baking paper here!
BEFORE YOU POUR THE BATTER, SMEAR BUTTER ON THE INSIDE OF YOUR SAUCEPAN AND SPRINKLE ON SOME FLOUR. THIS'LL MAKE IT EASIER TO GET THE CAKE OUT LATER ON!
We're using a saucepan, since there aren't any rectangular-shaped pans.
LAST OF ALL, GENTLY MIX IN THE MELTED BUTTER.
AND WITH THAT, THE BATTER'S DONE!
SHUT
POUR
TAP THE SAUCEPAN AGAINST THE TABLE TO GET RID OF ALL THOSE PESKY AIR BUBBLES.
TMP
TMP
AND NOW, LET'S BAKE IT!
TO THE OVEN!
Go!!

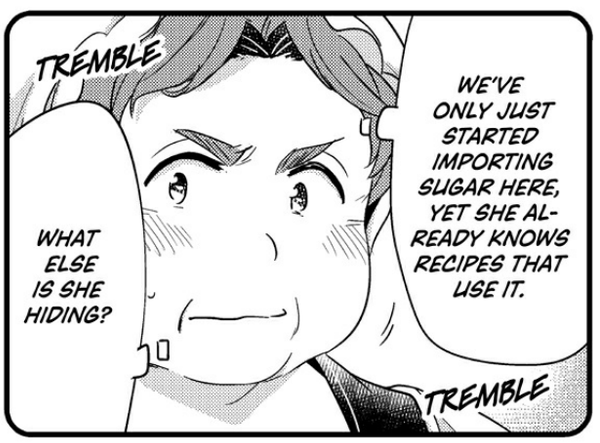

THUMP
PLEASE TURN OUT GOOD. WE USED SO MUCH SUGAR...
TREMBLE TREMBLE
FIDGET FIDGET
SQUISH
AH.
THERE'S BATTER STUCK TO IT,
SO THE INSIDE ISN'T DONE YET.
JUST A BIT LONGER.
HOW DO WE KNOW IF THE POUND CAKE'S DONE?
There aren't any bamboo skewers here, so we used a metal one instead.
YOU CAN CHECK BY POKING A SKEWER INTO IT.
TA-DA!
THE POUND CAKE IS DONE!
And so...



TASTE-TESTING









AND SO, LEISE SET HER SIGHTS ON MYNE.

ACHOO!



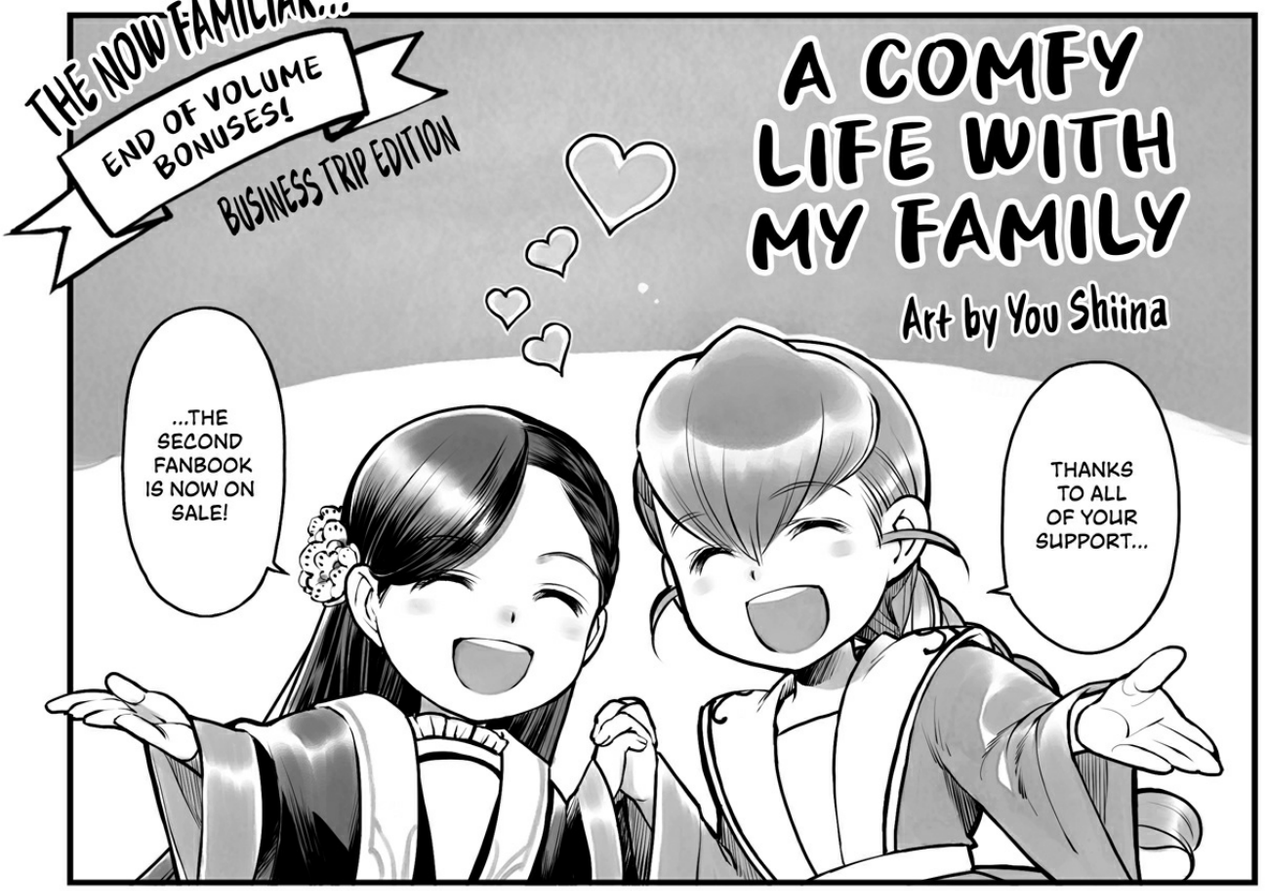
NEXT TIME WE MEET, I'LL GET MORE RECIPES OUT OF HER!

The End

Fanbook 2
Exclusive Original Illustration

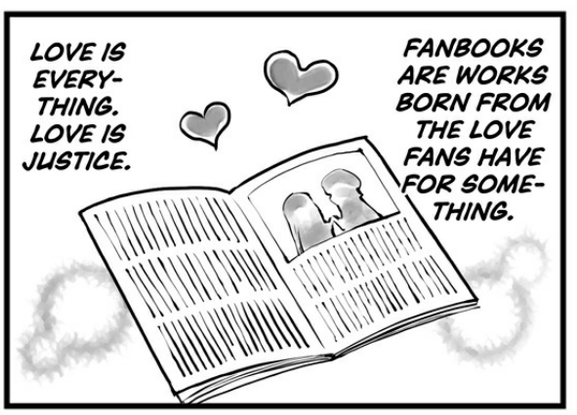


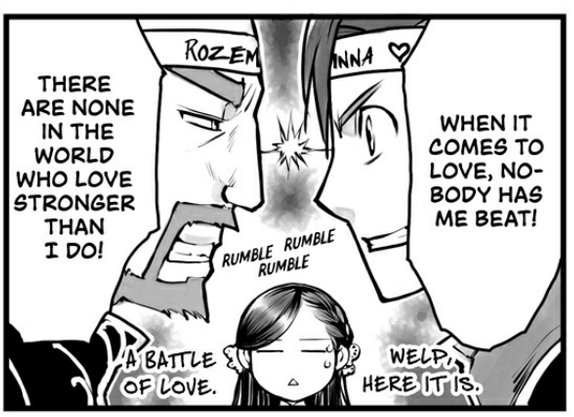



THE NOW FAMILIAR...
END OF VOLUME BONUSES!
BUSINESS TRIP EDITION
A COMFY LIFE WITH MY FAMILY
Art by You Shiina
...THE SECOND FANBOOK IS NOW ON SALE!
THANKS TO ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT...


LOVE
ROZEMYNE
DA-DA-
DUNN!

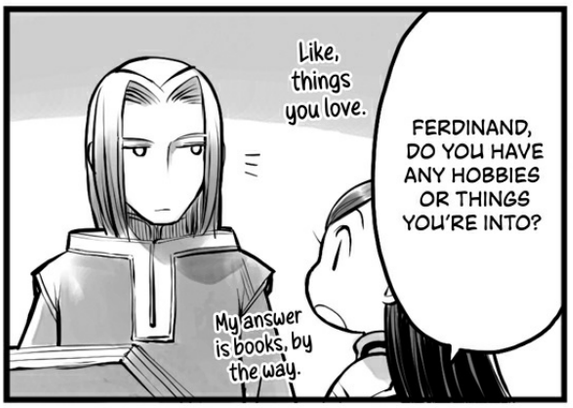
LOVE IS WAR

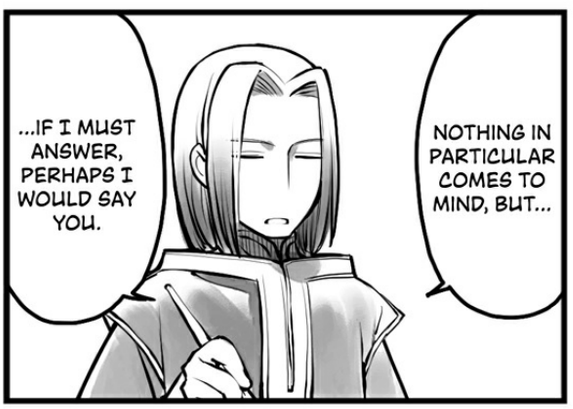

LOVE IS EVERY-THING. LOVE IS JUSTICE.
FANBOOKS ARE WORKS BORN FROM THE LOVE FANS HAVE FOR SOME-THING.

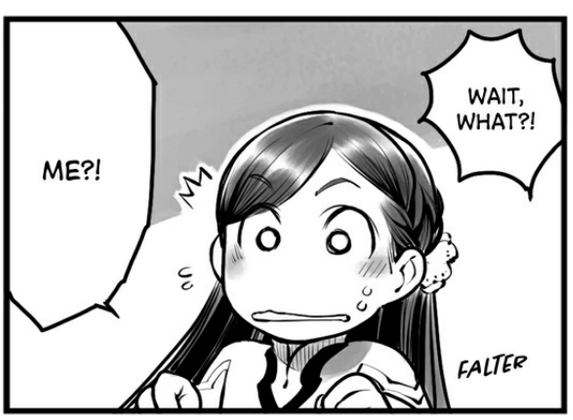

ROZEM INNA
THERE ARE NONE IN THE WORLD WHO LOVE STRONGER THAN I DO!
WHEN IT COMES TO LOVE, NO-BODY HAS ME BEAT!
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
A BATTLE OF LOVE.
WELP, HERE IT IS.

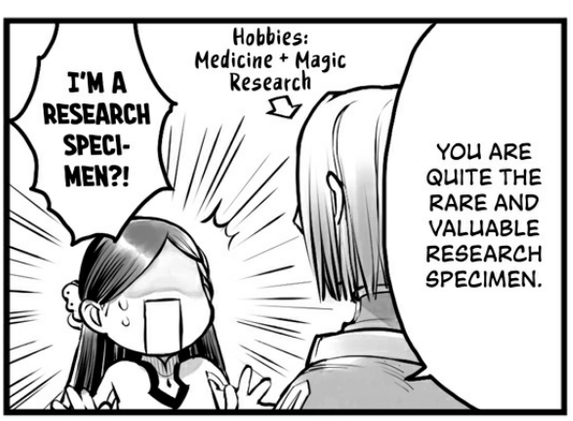

CORINNA
LOVE
DA-
DUNN!

IS THIS LOVE?



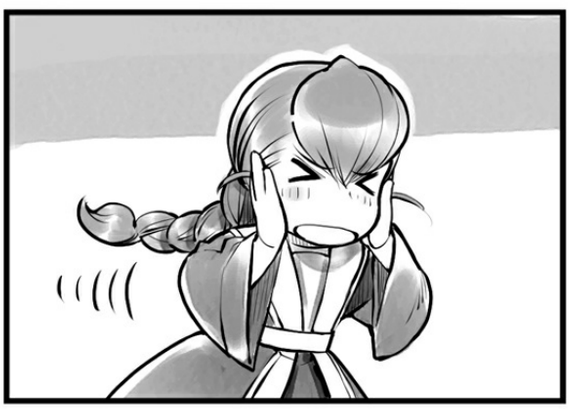


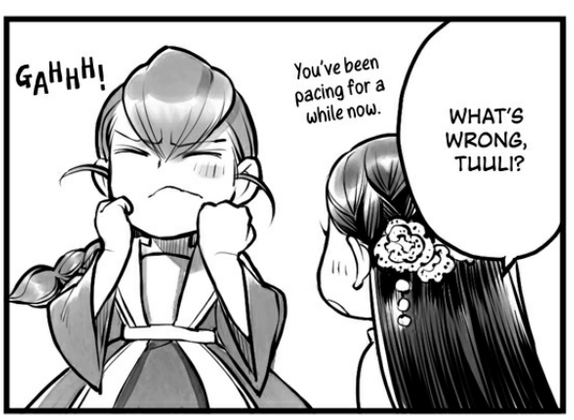


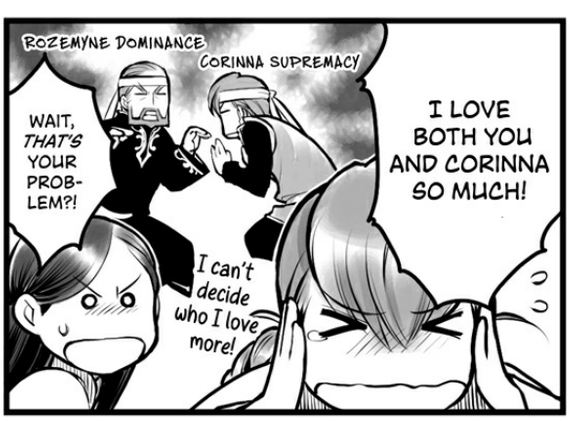


HARD CHOICES









Messages from the Creators

Miya Kazuki

This fanbook was made because so many people asked for a way to read the exclusive, event-only short stories they had missed, and also because people wanted my post-recording report and the post-recording manga in book form. Please enjoy.

You Shiina

It's already been a year since the last fanbook came out, but it feels like it was just yesterday to me... Time sure flies. Maybe a little too fast.

Suzuka

Since these fanbooks don't come out every day, I drew some extra illustrations as well as the manga. Take note of the two-page illustration—namely how much more of an overwhelming force the Ferdinand squad is compared to the Rozemyne one.

Ascendance of a Bookworm: Official Fanbook Volume 2
by Miya Kazuki
Illustrated by You Shiina and Suzuka

Translated by quof
Edited by Kieran Redgewell
English Lettering by Nicole Roderick
English Print Cover by Meiru

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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ISBN: 978-1-7183-4464-8
Digital Edition 1.0

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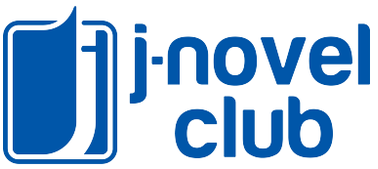
“Let’s Make Pound Cake!” by Suzuka

“A Comfy Life with My Family” by You Shiina

Messages from the Creators

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Original Japanese edition published in 2018 by TO Books, Tokyo.

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Ebook edition 1.0: November 2021